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Effects of adapted assessment and instructional tools to improve academic success in mild-moderate special education students

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Effects of Adapted Assessment and Instructional Tools to Improve Academic Success in Mild-Moderate Special Education Students

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EFFECTS OF ADAPTED ASSESSMENT AND INSTRUCTIONAL TOOLS TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN MILD-MODERATE SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

Effects of Adapted Assessment and Instructional Tools

to Improve Academic Success in Mild-Moderate

Special Education Students

by

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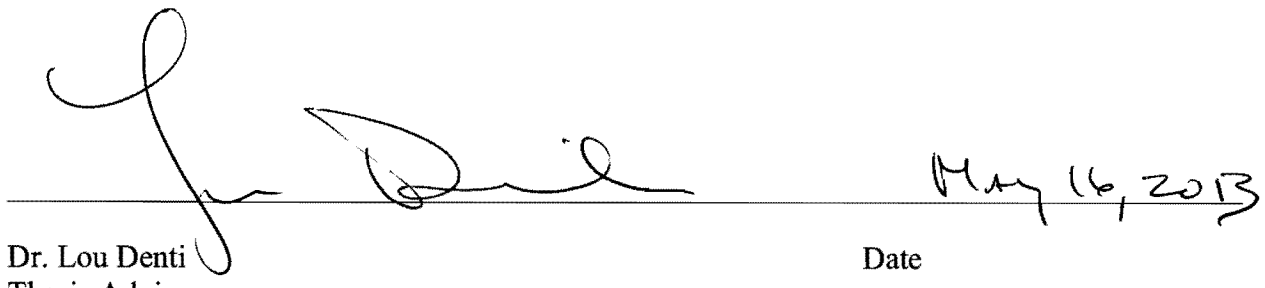
Approved by the Graduate Advisory Committee



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EFFECTS OF ADAPTED ASSESSMENT AND INSTRUCTIONAL TOOLS TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN MILD-MODERATE SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This action research investigates how adapted measurement tools used in formative and summative assessment affect academic success in mild to moderate special education students in a full-inclusion environment at the high school level. The adaptations used were created with regard to the accommodations and modifications associated with each student's Individual Educational Program (IEP). Prior to being assigned formative and summative assessment activities, adapted measurement tools for 18 students were created to enable them to access services and supports outlined in their IEPs. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to analyze results. Data collection included student interviews and surveys, teacher interviews, student work samples, and the researcher's reflective teaching journal. The results showed that with the implementation of adapted measurement tools, students experienced increased academic success in the form of grades, a greater sense of self-efficacy, improved effort and attitude toward learning, and enhanced student learning experiences.

EFFECTS OF ADAPTED ASSESSMENT AND INSTRUCTIONAL TOOLS TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN MILD-MODERATE SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EFFECTS OF ADAPTED ASSESSMENT AND INSTRUCTIONAL TOOLS TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN MILD-MODERATE SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

CHAPTER 1

Statement of Purpose

Introduction

The goal of this research is to increase the academic success and confidence of high school students receiving Special Education (SPED) in General Education (GE) classrooms as measured by the perceptions of the students and their GE teachers. To do this, I will evaluate whether adapted assessment and instructional tools will improve their perceptions of confidence, ability and attitude toward learning.

Problem Statement

As a high school SPED teacher serving students with Mild to Moderate (M/M) learning disabilities, the majority of my students are functioning several grades below grade level academically. Consequently, most students have experienced continuous struggles when immersed in instruction with their grade-level peers. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004) states that students with disabilities are entitled to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) that is appropriate to individual student needs, along with their non-disabled peers to the greatest extent possible. Hence, many school districts have chosen to promote a new service delivery model for students in special day classes including them in the nexus of the general education environment and, more importantly, in content classes ranging from math, science, history, and English.

By redistributing Special Day Class (SDC) students in general education classrooms and school environments, instruction tailored to individual academic and social needs in a specialized special education class no longer constitutes an adequate or socially accepted service delivery model. This is true especially in light of the knowledge demands for 21st century high school

graduates across the academic spectrum. These high demands present a multitude of problems. Formerly in the traditional SDC setting, students were in a small class of eight to 20 students with similar academic abilities and strategic learning needs. With the advent of full inclusion wherein students with mild to moderate disabilities participate in meaningful ways in the general education classrooms, many students with M/M disabilities are now experiencing social demands and academic rigor that coincide with a General Education (GE) College Preparatory (CP) classroom without the knowledge base or academic skills required to be successful. Further, students in inclusive classrooms are expected to meet grade-level standards; problematic when they are to be scored or graded on high school assignments and assessments but may have academic skills at the lower elementary level. Unfortunately, GE teachers are unprepared to handle the exigencies of instructing and grading students with mild to moderate disabilities because these students were always graded and instructed by special education teachers. Moreover, special education teachers are not well-acquainted on the content standards, grading requirements associated with content classes, nor have a good understanding of the expectations developed by general educators for determining academic success. Thus, collaboration between the SPED and GE teacher is essential, as GE teachers are not well acquainted with selecting and administering appropriate adaptations while staying in compliance with the student's Individualized Educational Program (IEP). In order for students with disabilities to experience the learning and receive the educational rights to which they are entitled under FAPE, it is vital that the teachers commit to a collaborative, professional culture, and a safe environment that fosters learning for *all* students.

Many GE teachers tend to instruct to the top, although their classes include a range of abilities from Advanced Placement (AP) and Honors students who elected not to take those courses because of the rigor, to my students with disabilities, many of whom are functioning at the lower elementary level. There is such a wide range of abilities that it is difficult for these teachers to differentiate instruction in core academic classes of 30-39 students. However, it is imperative that we provide all students an opportunity to succeed in the form of a passing grade if we cannot offer them a lower level course. In ongoing conversations with colleagues, many teachers voice frustration in not having guidelines for evaluating or grading students receiving SPED services. A sensible solution would be to establish a system which utilizes adapted measurement tools where lower-functioning students with SPED services could experience ongoing success in the form of grades. Therefore, it is crucial that educators offer M/M students with grading adaptations or adapted evaluating instruments to ensure that educators provide them with the basic skills that they do not possess. Moreover, when students with M/M disabilities are included in GE opportunities, it is important for SPED and GE teachers to collaborate and co-assess, in order to increase the likelihood that students will improve their grades and meet the content standards.

Purpose of Study

Since the school at which I teach does not have any grading policies or procedures in place for students receiving SPED services, I would like to determine which grading adaptations and adapted grading instruments are the most effective and easy to implement with consistency. After identifying which grading adaptations and evaluating instruments are most successful, as measured by the perspective of their general education teachers, I would like to recommend

implementation of schoolwide grading procedures for students with SPED services to be used in courses in which students are uniquely impacted by their disabilities. These grading adaptations would include adapted measurement tools which are aligned to standards-based curricula. As most assessment measures are designed without input from SPED teachers, students with SPED services and their GE teachers are likely going to face challenges. (Galloway, Stodden, & Stodden, 2003). Thus, there is a strong need for alignment between instructional and assessment accommodations (Thurlow, 2012).

Research Questions

With these problems being on the forefront of our full inclusion program, I propose the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of using adapted measurement tools for students with mild-moderate - disabilities with respect to their academic success from the perspective of their general education classroom teacher?
2. How does using adapted measurement tools impact on mild-moderate special education students' attitude towards learning, including their perceptions of their own academic success?

Theoretical Model

Abraham Maslow (1943) developed the theory that humans have a hierarchy of needs. The fifth is defined as an all-encompassing level of self-actualization, or the need to fulfill one's potential. The fourth level in this hierarchy is esteem; as it relates to confidence, achievement, and respect from and for others. Love and belonging is the third level; safety the second; and physiological needs and its key components being the first. The third, fourth, and fifth levels

directly relate to the needs of students targeted in this study; students must have feelings of belongingness, self-esteem and self-respect, and in turn, self-actualization. When students with special needs earn poor outcomes in terms of grading, they may experience an absence of belonging and/or develop low self-esteem, and in turn, a lack of self-respect. B.F. Skinner suggests that the use of punishment and reward systems should be used as an extrinsic motivational tool for students who need reinforcement to succeed. Students that earn higher grades may be more likely to the build self-confidence needed to meet the third, fourth, and fifth levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Students may attribute failure to lack of ability, thus making the student more likely to give up if they do not experience recurrent success.

Skinner's theory of operant conditioning (1938) includes four key concepts: positive and negative reinforcement, as well as positive and negative punishment. Good grades could be considered positive reinforcers as they are favorable outcomes that are presented after the behavior. The response or behavior is reinforced by adding both praise from the teacher and a direct reward in the form of a grade. Poor grades would be considered positive punishment, as they are unfavorable events designed to decrease the behavior that it follows (e.g., poor test performance). Considering Maslow's theory, this positive punishment could result in the absence of the third and fourth levels of his hierarchy of needs, whereas positive reinforcers could fulfill these needs. Donahue & Zigmond (1990) state that special education students have historically received poor grades, thus making them more susceptible to low self-esteem and dropping out of school.

Heider (1958) proposed the psychological theory of attribution which explained the difference in motivation between low and high achievers. According to this theory, low

achievers avoid tasks related to success because they doubt their ability and/or they attribute success to factors beyond their control. Students with disabilities are more likely to attribute success to the external factors, and failure to lack of ability, whereas their non-disabled peers generally attribute successful outcomes to internal causes of effort and ability (Chapman & Boersman, 1979; Jacobsen, Lowery & DuCette, 1986). A student's grade can be interpreted as a message about his or her performance (Carpenter, 1985), and this can be received and interpreted according to the student's motivation, self-concept, and attributions about his or her academic competence, influencing future academic behaviors (as cited in Ring & Reetz, 2000).

Furthermore, the concept of self-efficacy was the focal point of Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory (1977). He defines self-efficacy as "the belief in one's capabilities to organize and exercise the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (Bandura, 1977, p. 191). An individual's sense of self-efficacy has a major effect on how tasks and challenges are approached. People with a strong sense of self-efficacy recover quickly from setbacks and disappointments, develop a deeper interest in, and form a stronger sense of commitment to their interests and activities, and view challenging problems as tasks to be mastered. People with a weak sense of self efficacy tend to quickly lose confidence in personal abilities, focus on personal failings and negative outcomes, believe that difficult tasks and situations are beyond their abilities, and avoid challenging tasks. Self-efficacy can impact on behavior, motivation, and psychological states. Bandura explains that when a task is performed successfully, it strengthens our sense of self efficacy, whereas not being able to perform or succeed at a task effectively can weaken this sense. Additionally, when students see peers similar to themselves experience

success followed by continual effort, it makes them believe that they can succeed at similar tasks (Bandura, 1977).

Vygotsky (1978) corroborates Bandura's findings when he defines the zone of proximal development (ZPD) as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers." Vygotsky's ZPD goes hand in hand with the theory of "scaffolding." The theory of scaffolding was first introduced in the 1950s by Jerome Bruner. Scaffolding allows learners to solely concentrate upon and complete the elements of a task that are within his or her range of capability, eliminating or assisting with the elements that are too complicated for the learner to comprehend (Wood, Brumer & Ross, 1976). In addition, the authors suggested the following in order for scaffolding to yield success: make the task simple, demonstrate the task, gain and maintain the learner's interest, emphasize certain aspects that will help produce the solution, and control the learner's level of frustration. If good scaffolding occurs, the learner would be expected to thrive in their zone of proximal development, thus attributing success to ability, and in turn developing the self-confidence needed to develop a strong enough sense of self-efficacy to view challenging tasks as tasks to be mastered.

Researcher Background

In my experience as a SPED teacher, I have taught a wide range of high school M/M students with unique needs. This has included teaching English Language Arts (ELA) to students with pre-phonetic skills and Algebra to students who have difficulty solving single-digit basic mathematical operation problems, teaching students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD),

teaching a Life Skills program to students with Intellectual Disability, and teaching a Social Communication program to students with Autism. I have experienced great success with my students in teaching the aforementioned subjects and programs with intensive instruction and small group settings. Through small group, scaffolded, and differentiated instruction designed to suit individual student needs, my students were able to achieve success and be challenged at their grade level ability equivalent, while also being exposed to grade level content. It has been with the introduction of full inclusion in the past two school years that my students, many of the same students who were in the classes and programs mentioned above just two years ago, are now experiencing the greatest frustration and roadblocks to success in the form of grades.

As the site where I currently teach is a "pilot program" for full inclusion, we are making great strides by incorporating these once-alienated students into courses with their peers. Socially, they have benefitted greatly. The students have become more mature, communicatively advanced and socially adept. Academically, they are being exposed to curricula which were once thought to be far beyond their comprehension and are absorbing a considerable quantity of it. With these benefits, however, also come many disadvantages and pitfalls. Many of the once-labeled SDC students have failed several courses as a result of their inability to function at the level at which they are expected to achieve. Even with IEP accommodations and modifications, they have great difficulty reaching the standards expected of them, and oftentimes, appropriate accommodations and modifications are not put into place. To remedy this, many schools have implemented the co-teaching model, which allows SPED teachers and other support services personnel such as Instructional Aides (IAs), and Speech Therapists (Salend, 2005) to work

collaboratively with GE teachers in order to construct successful learning experiences and support students with disabilities (Carpenter & Dyal, 2007).

A student's IEP outlines the areas in which s/he will need support, and which accommodations may be appropriate. For example, a high school senior with a disability in reading comprehension and who may be reading at the third grade level may be receiving support in his or her English Language Arts and Government classes. This student would go to a GE CP class for instruction, and a SPED teacher and/or and Instructional Aide (IA) would provide services in that class by co-teaching or serving as push-in support. As SPED teachers, we are responsible for ensuring modifications and accommodations are being implemented, and in some cases, for providing more intensive instruction in an Individualized Studies (IS) period serving 12-15 students with a wide range of needs. However, the GE teacher is the teacher responsible for instruction and assigning grades.

With respect to this need, I am often asked how to grade particular students, but there is never any black or white answer— every class and every student is unique. With around 30 students on my caseload all taking six very different courses at any given time, it is difficult to define exact adaptations that need to be made often on a daily basis. In the past two years, I have worked with a diverse group of teachers, most of whom have very different educational goals, philosophies and perspectives. It is in conversation with these teachers that I find myself advocating for my students now more so than ever, and trying to convince the teachers to make needed adaptations for "Student X" or "Student Y." Oftentimes the teachers are very receptive to consultative suggestions for adaptations. At other times, I find much more difficulty in coming to agreements as to what is most appropriate for "Student X" to access the curriculum—and

sometimes the questions of fairness, and "how much help is too much help?" come up. With background knowledge of these students, it often seems that the rigors of the course make success unattainable unless schoolwide adaptation policies and procedures are put into place. Moreover, when students do experience success in the form of grades in these classes, the grades are artificial and represent minimal learning. In other words, schools "must integrate the goals of full participation in standards-based curriculum and the provision of individualized services and supports in order to enable students with disabilities to succeed at the same level as their peers without disabilities" (Galloway, Stodden, & Stodden, 2003).

Part of my job description and duty as a SPED teacher is to be an advocate for my students and to problem-solve for any issues that may arise as a result of their disabilities. Regardless of the effort they put forth, many of these students are receiving poor grades because of their disabilities which result in great academic difficulties. In fact, many low grades have been justified by the opinion that the grades are a true reflection of their abilities without putting appropriate adaptation into place. There is a moral obligation to seek a remedy for this ethical and operational dilemma.

This study examines the use of modified grading procedures to include adapted grading instruments as a means of improving students' academic success and confidence.

This chapter has provided the introduction and background information to my topic. Chapter 2 will provide a review of literature.

Definitions of Terms

- Accommodation: A change made in a course, assessment, or expectation that enables a student with a disability equal access to the material and does *not* lower or change the standard, assessment, or expectation.
- Adapted Measurement Tools: Measures used in the classroom to evaluate mastery of a topic, adapted to accommodate individual student needs. These tools can include formal and informal classroom assessments, summative and formative assessments, daily assignments, etc.
- Full Inclusion: An educational program in which all students, regardless of disability, are included in heterogeneous courses, with the exception of students with moderate to severe disabilities and those with more severe cases of Mild-Moderate disabilities including Intellectual Disabilities (formerly known as mental retardation), Autism, and Emotional Disturbance
- Grading Adaptations: Procedures or strategies that can be used to individualize the grading system for a student with disabilities (Silva, Munk, & Bursuck, 2005)
- Individual Educational Program (IEP): A legal document which is reviewed and adapted by the special education teacher, parent, student, an administrator, and general education teacher, and other service providers when appropriate such as speech therapists, which outlines their educational needs, including accommodations and modifications needed to attain success in the classroom

- Modification: A change made in a course, assessment, or expectation that enables a student with a disability equal access to the material and does lower or change the standard, assessment, or expectation.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

Introduction

Grading is one of the greatest challenges and one of the most important professional responsibilities a teacher may have (Guskey, 2006). Teachers find particular difficulty in determining an objective and fair means of grading students with learning disabilities (LD) in the general education classroom (Jung & Guskey, 2007). Furthermore, most educators have not received much direction on how to assign meaningful grades to students with LD (Jung & Guskey, 2010).

Munk and Bursuck (2001) state that success in secondary education is often measured by grades, and students with LD in inclusive settings often receive poor grades, thus suggesting poor outcomes for these students. This is mainly due to the fact that students with LD often engage and contribute to learning activities differently than their general education (GE) peers (Jung & Guskey 2007). Further complicating matters are factors such as a lack of knowledge pertaining to legalities for grading increased rigorous academic standards (particularly maintaining the high standards for high school graduation), and lack of familiarity with student Individual Education Plans (IEP) and student capabilities (Salend & Duhaney, 2002; Pollard & Rojewski, 1993).

Methods of grading students with disabilities included in the general education setting have been widely examined and researched, in order to find practices that are fair, accurate and meaningful. Grading adaptations can be used to help general and special educators address some frequent issues linked with grading students with LD (Silva, Munk, & Bursuck, 2005).

Grading adaptions are defined by Silva et al. (2005) as "procedures or strategies that can be used to individualize the grading system for a student with disabilities" (p. 88). They are legal modifications for students with disabilities but must be specified in a student's IEP unless the teacher is willing to make the same adaptions for the rest of the class, regardless of whether or not the other students are in special education (Salend & Duhaney, 2002). Practitioners, students, and parents agree that grading adaptions are needed in order for students to be successful in the educational environment in which those with LD have already experienced failure (Fuchs, Fuchs, Hamlett, Phillips & Karns, 1995; Keogh, 1988; Zigmond & Baker, 1994).

Research has shown that students with disabilities have historically had unfavorable outcomes under conventional grading practices (Munk & Bursuck 2001). Thus, the purpose of this literature review is to examine studies on the methods and procedures of using adaptations for students with LD in the general education environment and to determine which are most effective. Furthermore, this review will examine aspects of adaptations to determine the level of appropriateness for students.

Review of Literature

The intent of this literature review is to look closely at specific studies on various grading systems to determine which adaptations are most effective to make grades more meaningful to students with LD in the inclusive general education setting. The overall research implies that, when implemented, individualized grading systems can be beneficial for students with LD by exposing them to the rigors of the general education curriculum while receiving grades that are a true reflection of their individual progress (Munk & Bursuck, 2001). However, in identifying some methodological issues, the research also infers that most grading systems in general

education classrooms are not designed to be individualized or to meet the needs of students receiving SPED services. Also there is an overall lack of clarity about the purpose of grading (Guskey, 2006). Munk & Bursuck (2001) state that teachers are unsure of how to make grading adaptions due to lack of knowledge or training. In turn, students with LD receive unfair and inaccurate grades in which little meaningful information about student achievement is conveyed.

To remedy this, Silva et al. (2005) and Guskey (2006) identified three categories of grading adaptations that allow a teacher to assign grades for both classroom assignments and report cards to students with LD. These three categories include product criteria, progress criteria, and process criteria. These adaptations make grading students with LD easier, are effective, and establish clear standards. Consequently, several authors also suggest modifying weights and scales when determining grades (Bursuck et al. 1996; Bursuck and Friend, 2006; and Silva et al., 2005). Research on these potential adaptations will be reviewed, with an emphasis on adapted measurement, followed by research on how they relate to student academic success and student attitudes towards learning.

Product criteria

Product criteria address what students know and are able to do at a particular point in time. They communicate precise achievement or level of proficiency as measured by overall assessments of learning such as tests, reports, or presentations (Jung & Guskey, 2010).

A student's IEP can be factored in when determining product criteria. For example, if the IEP defines the level of mastery expected of a student (e.g., 70%), this then directs the student's work obligation to earn a certain grade (Polloway & Epstein, 1994). But first, the IEP team must also determine whether the student has the ability to achieve any given standard at the grade

level, then decide whether the student needs accommodations or modifications to achieve the standard (Guskey & Jung 2009). For example, although a teacher may require a student to respond in complete sentences, partial sentence responses may be accepted from a student currently working on an IEP goal of writing in complete sentences. (McLoughlin & Lewis, 2008). Perceived acceptability is the degree to which teachers find these adaptations as helpful and accurately delineating student performance, which may affect the extent to which they are utilized (Polloway, Bursuck, Jayanthi, Epstein & Nelson, 1996).

Another acceptable grading adaptation in this category is to hold the student accountable for only the content and assignments which are determined to be the most important. This adaptation allows the student more time to focus on the important assignments and do well, rather than focusing on less important content and risk performing poorly. The prioritized content can be based on local, state, or national standards, classroom curriculum, or other criteria established by the IEP team (Silva et al., 2005).

Process criteria

Process criteria consider components such as work habits and effort, and relate it to student behaviors to see how students arrived at their current level of achievement and proficiency (Guskey, 2006). Likewise, parents sometimes feel there is a lack of individualization in grading, and that components such as these should be taken into consideration when assigning a grade (Munk & Bursuck, 2001). Conversely, if too much weight is placed on process criteria such as effort, a student may perceive that the quality of the final product is not an imperative part of grading (Silva et al., 2005). Grading students on effort may prevent them from seeking assistance that is essential to growth, creating the misconception that they are making

satisfactory progress (Bursuck et al., 1996). Students may be so deficient in skills that they will not be able to obtain or maintain gainful employment following high school. Other studies support the idea that students should not be graded strictly on effort and that all report card grades should contain an academic component (Gersten, Vaughn & Brengelman, 1996).

Thus, process criteria should not be used alone when determining a grade, but only as a component. However, placing emphasis on the process allows students to get credit for their time, effort, and good work habits. It also exposes students to particular processes that will be beneficial to their success beyond high school (Silva et al., 2005).

Progress criteria

Progress criteria consider how much students have improved or gained from their learning experiences. Instead of measuring where a student is in learning, they relate how much improvement he or she has made over a specified period of time (Guskey. 2006), which can be beneficial to a student as a means of motivation to put forth more effort. Furthermore, it could present incentive for a student to make use of the resources and supports that are offered, as well as allowing teachers to gradually increase expectations for students (Silva et al., 2005).

The goals and objectives from individual IEPs can also be used to determine a student's grade, and have potential benefits when used in this way. Basing grades on progress on these objectives ensures that the skills identified as being most important by the IEP team are being reflected in the grade. Also, it eliminates the need for reporting progress on IEP objectives separately (Silva et al., 2005). However, general education (GE) teachers often do not have access to information regarding student and/or familiarity with student capabilities (Pollard & Rojewski, 1993). Further, unless the IEP objectives are based on the general education

curriculum, using Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) as a basis for grading presents a potential dilemma where students are assessed using measures unaligned with the general education curriculum (Bursuck & Friend, 2006).

Modifying weights and scales

Another suggestion for adapting grading procedures for LD students is adjusting the weights. These changes may include altering the point requirements for specific grades or modifying the weights of various categories of assignments. For example, a student earning 67% of the total points may earn a C instead of a D, as the schoolwide grading policy may indicate. Additionally, if a student struggles on tests but seems to benefit from homework, the teacher could alter the weights of the two to make homework weigh more heavily on the student's grade (Silva et al., 2005).

Using modified weights and scales may encourage students to continue to put forth effort, because they may earn a grade that seemed unlikely, perhaps impossible, before the adaptation (Bursuck & Friend, 2006). While this may be true, grades can become inaccurate if too many modifications to the weights and scales are made. This method should be used carefully since it does not necessitate a change in the student's performance, thus sending a message to the student that there is no need for improvement.

Adapted measurement and student academic success

Unfortunately, there has been little research focusing specifically on adapted measurement instruments as they relate to academic success. While research indicates grades of LD students within an inclusion classroom suggest poor outcomes for many secondary students (Munk & Bursuck, 2001), it also states that the impact of adaptations as they affect grades and

success of students with LD is largely unknown (Bursuck et al., 1996). However, as mentioned in the problem statement, schools "must integrate the goals of full participation in standards-based curriculum, and the provision of individualized services and supports in order to enable students with disabilities to succeed at the same level as their peers without disabilities" (Galloway, Stodden, & Stodden, 2003, p. 11). Thus, adapted measurements can be helpful when limited abilities may hinder a student's content mastery of an assignment or test, since a student may meet with difficulty when asked to present knowledge in a way which the student lacks skills (Salend & Duhaney, 2002).

Because students are faced with the same testing standards as their GE peers in the inclusive classroom, testing is an area which needs attention with respect to adaptations (Polloway & Bursuck, 1996) because of the impact tests have on grades. Several adaptations, including giving individual help with directions, simplifying wording of test questions, reading test questions to students, and giving practice questions as a study guide have been identified as among the top adaptations in facilitating success for students with LD.

Some studies suggest that teachers are inclined to see the most desirable adaptations as the least feasible (Bradley & Calvin, 1998; Schumm & Vaughn, 1991, as cited in Mastergeorge & Martínez, 2010; Ysseldyke, Thurlow, Wotruba, & Nania, 1990) and when an adaptation is less feasible, it becomes unattractive to a teacher, so he or she is unlikely to implement it (Bursuck et al., 1996).

Adapted measurement and student attitude towards learning

As stated, there has been little research on the effectiveness of adapted measurements with respect to student academic success. There has been even less research on the impact of

adapted measurements on student affective factors. What is known is that students with LD often have a painful history of continuous frustration and disappointment which may put them at risk for future academic difficulties, and there is a great need to find ways to change this and empower these students (Lackaye & Margalit, 2006).

While non-disabled students generally attribute successful outcomes to internal causes of effort and ability, and to attribute failure externally (Chapman & Boersman, 1979; Jacobsen, Lowery & DuCette, 1986), students with disabilities are more likely to attribute success to external factors, and failure to lack of ability (Jacobsen et al., 1986). On the contrary, when the students with disabilities in this study are successful, this theory may infer that because of their long history of low performance, they may attribute their success to factors beyond their control, rather than attributing the success to intrinsic abilities. A student's grade can be interpreted as a message about his or her performance (Carpenter, 1985), and this can be received and interpreted according to the student's motivation, self-concept, and beliefs about his or her academic competence, influencing future academic behaviors (as cited in Ring & Reetz, 2000). In Ring & Reetz's study (2000), students who received accommodations and adaptations believed they applied more effort than their peers who did not receive the same level of adaptations, in effect feeling more in control of outcomes and expressing a higher sense of self-efficacy. Students attributed their highest grades to effort, ability, and interest. Moreover, in a survey among 275 high school students with and without disabilities, a combination of process and product criteria was seen as the most fair out of nine different adaptations, whereas modified weights and scales was also seen as the least fair (Munk & Bursuck, 2001).

Summary/Conclusions

Although research shows that there are extensive options for grading adaptations available to students with disabilities, there does not seem to be any general consensus on what is the most appropriate or most effective practice in evaluating student performance (Pollard & Rojewski, 1993). The research on methods of grading students with disabilities is vast, and researchers have identified positive outcomes for grading adaptations when used properly. While quantitative data on the actual effects of individual grading systems and grading adaptations is lacking, there are a great many qualitative studies that are mostly self-report in nature. Overall, the use of these grading adaptations (product criteria, progress criteria, process criteria, and modifying weights and scales) can be effective when used in combination with one another. These adaptations can create a grading system individualized for a student's unique needs and offer parents valuable information about their child's progress and performance in school (Jung & Guskey, 2010). Whatever methods are used, it is important that teachers receive more training to adapt grading practices for students with LD (Struyk & Epstein, 1995).

Compliance with special education laws is one of the greatest issues that special education teachers face, and a deficit of addressing this issue is probably the greatest criticism of these articles. Although compliance with special education law (namely IDEA [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act] 2004) pertaining to each of the methods is not clearly outlined in most of the research, there are several important guidelines mentioned. For example, Guskey & Jung (2009 and 2010) mention how to legally denote grading modifications on report cards and transcripts. Bursuck and Friend (2006) elaborate on some legalities of grading students with disabilities; most notably clarifying that, if offered to students with disabilities, grading

modifications must be available to all students regardless of their special education status, unless the adaptations are indicated in the student's IEP. Bursuck and Friend (2006) also clarify that collaboration between a general and special educator is appropriate when determining a student's grade is appropriate, as long as this collaboration is specified in the student's IEP.

Bursuck and Friend (2006) further explain the legalities of indicating special education course status on institutional transcripts and clarify that a student's special education status cannot be reflected on transcripts, nor can course names indicate that any special education service was delivered with indicators such as "resource" or "SPED." Instead, a transcript can denote a modified curriculum or alternate curriculum by labeling the course with asterisks or other symbols. However, a course cannot be labeled with asterisks or symbols if only accommodations are made, as accommodations are only to enable the student to learn and progress in the general curriculum, and do not affect course content or curriculum. In addition, it is up to individual districts to determine how they will weigh these courses into GPAs, honor roll, and class ranking, but special education classes and general education classes cannot be arbitrarily dismissed when calculating these. Consequently, a teacher may question if the aforementioned grading adaptations are considered accommodations or modifications, which would likely be unique in each case depending on which criteria or combination of criteria they may select for any given student.

Further detail on where the line between accommodations and modifications for grading adaptations lies would improve the comprehensiveness of the articles reviewed. Perhaps of utmost importance, Guskey and Jung (2009) refer to The Supreme Court case, Board of Education v. Rowley (1982), which states that IEPs must "enable a child to achieve passing

marks and advance from grade to grade." Therefore, "a failing grade for a student receiving special education services is considered an indication that appropriate educational services were not provided" (p. 54). Although it seems that each of these legal guidelines is pertinent to almost every study in the review, most of the aforementioned policies were sparse throughout the literature and only mentioned in one or two of the comprehensive synthesis of articles.

Also, research shows that many schools have grading policies. In a survey of 225 school districts, Polloway & Epstein (1994) found that 65% of the districts had written grading policies, and of those, 60% included some guidelines for including students with disabilities. It is recommended that before making grading adaptations, the IEP team cross-reference the district grading policy, if one exists (Munk & Bursuck, 2004).

Studies included in this review were deficient in providing direction for writing grading adaptations into student IEPs. Although guidelines for writing IEPs vary from district to district and are continually changing in format and in terms of requirements, it would be helpful to get some sense of direction in regard to how to incorporate these adaptations into IEP documents.

Implementation of individualized grading systems is no small feat. More collaboration time is required between general and special education teachers and other members of the IEP team. Salend and Duhaney (2000) give suggestions on effective instructional practices such as involving students and families in the grading process and communicating expectations and grading guidelines and criteria. They recommend that students be provided with exemplary models of assignments and rubrics outlining expectations of assignments. Other suggestions include calculating grades on median rather than mean scores, giving extra credit, and providing nongraded assignments and feedback on learning activities to improve a student's learning prior

to an assessment. Selecting grading adaptations should be a collaborative process among IEP team members (Silva et al., 2005); therefore, throughout the implementation, collaboration time between regular and special education teachers is essential.

As inclusion of special education students into general education classrooms becomes more common, the grades that these students earn will remain the quantitative measure of their achievement, whether it be success or failure. Thus, educating teachers on systems of grading adaptations for students with disabilities will ease the transition to inclusion amidst the host of other issues that accompany this change. Students in special education have historically received lower grades than their peers, making them susceptible to low self-esteem and dropping out of school (Donahue & Zigmond, 1990). Therefore, making these adaptations will allow students to experience a greater possibility of success.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Introduction

This action research study is focused on how adapted measurement tools affect student achievement and affect. Specifically, this study focuses of how selected adapted assessment instruments will improve academic success and self-efficacy in mild to moderate special education students. While there is a great deal of research on specific methods for adapting assessment instruments, there is a lack of studies which focus on how these adaptations impact teacher and student perceptions of success, as well as affective measures such as student self-efficacy.

Research Methodology

Overall Plan

I used an action research approach because it addresses immediate, specific problems within a classroom or school to improve professional practice. Through action research, I can seek solutions and answers to my questions and yield an action plan that can be implemented further. As a special education teacher I am committed to ongoing professional development, reflecting and improving on my practice, and advocating for students with disabilities by implementing strategies to help students with disabilities access the curriculum. Action research will allow me to do this.

Specific Research Plan

Practical classroom action research addresses specific and generally narrow problems within a classroom or school for the purpose of solving those problems, and it yields a plan of action for educational improvement. But in addition to addressing issues directly related to

student learning, practical classroom action research also focuses on an ongoing cycle of teacher development by empowering teachers to design, conduct, and interpret their own research within a commitment to professional development focused on student learning (Creswell, 2012).

Setting

This study was conducted at a high school in a suburban agricultural city in central California. It is one of four public high schools in the district. The student population consists of approximately 2,600 students, 61% of which are Hispanic/Latino, 29% white, 3% Asian, 3% Filipino, 2% African American or Black, 1% American Indian or Alaska Native, 1% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 1% not reported. Of the student population, 34% are English Learners, 46% are socioeconomically disadvantaged, and 4% have disabilities. At the time of the research, the school received Title I funding and was in its second year of program improvement. The school year is 180 days which span from August through May, and the school serves grades 9-12. The school was in its third year of offering a full-inclusion model for M/M special education students, in which most of these students spent a minimum of 89% of their day in general education courses, with all core content area courses being at CP (College Preparatory) level. Other course levels include GATE (Gifted and Talented Education), Honors, AP (Advanced Placement), one FA (Functional Academics) program consisting of 15 students diagnosed with ID (Intellectual Disability), and one CBI/LIF (Community Based Instruction/Life Skills) program consisting of 18 students with M/S (Moderate to Severe) disabilities. There also are ROP (Regional Occupational Program) courses offered for vocational training and an AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program, as well as academies within the school including a Fitness and Sports Training Academy and a Sustainable Design and Green

Construction Academy. Parent involvement opportunities are vast. Parents of students receiving SPED services are required to attend annual IEP Team meetings. The school offers parents access to an online grade monitoring system, opportunities for involvement in the athletic boosters club and involvement in school site council. It also offers a "Parent University" through the Migrant/Bilingual Education program, in which parents can be educated on pathways to a successful transition for their children. At the time of the research, there were approximately 110 full-time teachers, one principal, three assistant principals, five counselors, and various classified staff including 11 IAs (Instructional Aides) for the M/M special education program.

Participants

The participants in the study consisted of 18 special education students, one (GE) teacher, and me. All student participants were in grades 10 and 12, and were on my special education caseload. They were grouped in four separate CP English classes with the general education teacher during periods 1, 2, 5, and 6, and Algebra during periods 2,3 and 6. Each student in the study was also enrolled in an "Individual Studies" course as part of their special education service delivery, which I teach during periods 3 and 4. Students have a wide range of abilities, spanning from scoring less than the .01 percentile through grade level in the areas of Word Reading/Decoding, Reading Comprehension, Written Expression, Spelling, Listening Comprehension, and Oral Expression. Students had well-below average to average IQs. The majority of students had Specific Learning Disabilities with deficits in the areas of visual and/or auditory processing and/or attention. Some students had Speech and Language Impairments, and one student had Autism. Students had motivational levels ranging from low to high, and motivation level is independent of disability type or level. Based on my own familiarity with the

students, including my observations and extensive research on each of their cases, six had a low motivational level, seven had a medium motivational level, and five had a high motivational level. 12 were Latino/Hispanic and six were white. Of these 18 students, six are girls and 12 are boys. Over half are long-term ELLs (English Language Learners), most being born in the U.S. but living in Spanish-speaking households and not yet RFEP (Reclassified as Fluent English Proficient) by the CELDT (California English Language Development Test). At the time of the research, these students had been on my caseload for eight months to three years. Of the 18 students, 16 were previously in Special Day Class (SDC) programs, with the majority or all of their classes being self-contained, out of the GE setting.

The GE participant in this study, Mrs. Smith, has been teaching for three years. She earned her Bachelors of Science in Operations information Systems from University of Massachusetts, and is currently 2 courses away from receiving her Master's in Education in Curriculum and Instruction. Prior to teaching, she worked in investments (finance), insurance (property and casualty) and college career advising. Due to her husband's military career, she has relocated twice since she earned her teaching credential, and has had the opportunity to teach both middle school and now high school students. Her subject area is Mathematics and in her perfect world, "all students would run to a math class full of excitement and eagerness to learn." She believes that all students should be provided an opportunity to succeed; for, "just like adults, we do not want to do something if we know our chances of success are very limited to almost none." She wants to make success attainable for all students, "even if it is in little chunks." She would like to create a safe learning environment that will allow them to learn and take ownership

of their success. In her opinion, "inclusion is a great idea and can be successful if the proper support is available to students."

As mentioned, I was the teacher-participant in this study. In my seventh year of teaching special education at the high school level, I participated as the action researcher by implementing adapted measurement tools in the general education classroom, then observing, interviewing, and collecting data. I am female, and have taught at the same site throughout my career, which is also my alma mater. I have taught a wide range of subjects and abilities, including self-contained special education content courses such as: English, Pre-Algebra, Algebra, Consumer Math, Earth Science, Language Arts Development, and Individual Studies; all to M/M disabled students. I also have taught a Functional Academics/Community Based Instruction program to students with Intellectual Disabilities, a Social-Communicative program to students with Autism, and several academic intervention courses to at-risk or remedial students. Because these students were now exposed to academic requirements based on standards far beyond their academic and/or cognitive abilities, my colleagues, students, along with myself were now confronted with a new challenge.

Intervention & Data Collection

This action research project will incorporate both qualitative and quantitative data collection strategies to provide the most comprehensive answers to the research questions.

Intervention. The intervention consisted of using a combination of several different adaptations to assess student academic progress with an emphasis on product criteria. Examples of adapted formative and summative assessment instruments include writing frames, multiple choice options for instruments which require a fair amount of content vocabulary recall,

providing context clues and "hint boxes" and/or handouts with step-by-step instructions or visual models, and intensive, individualized or small group instruction sessions. The greatest emphasis was on product criteria adaptations related to formative and summative assessment, as the goal of this research is to enable students access to reach the learning standards.

Formative and summative assessment adaptations. The adaptations were incorporated into formative and summative assessments in the students' GE class(es). The general education teachers were responsible for the primary planning of the lessons (i.e., what will be taught and when), as they are the highly qualified content area teachers. Through collaboration, we will share ideas for material, much of which was newly created either collaboratively during collaborative and consultative sessions, or by me based on my expertise in scaffolding instruction.

In each class session, students were responsible for learning a wide variety of topics and were given scaffolded instruction and adapted tools for them to achieve each standard. These product criteria were the primary adaptation used. These tools included explicit guidelines, brainstorming activities, visual models, vocabulary suggestions and tips, word banks, multiple choice options, sentence and writing frames, reference guides/lists (see Appendix 1 for sample), handouts with tips and tricks, simplified vocabulary, "hint boxes," and "get started!" clues (see Appendix 2 for sample), handouts with formulas and graphic organizers and step-by-step tools to solving problems (see Appendices 3A, 3B, and 3C for samples), and shortened assignments and assessments when deemed appropriate. Students were assigned various writing activities, essays, and formative and summative assessments. The major writing assignment, designed to yield summative assessment, required several sub-assignments which were essential in

preparation for the end product. Smaller writing assignments were designed to yield formative data, and ranged from 20-minute quick-writes to short, more frequent five-paragraph essays. Several fiction and non-fiction readings addressed thematic questions. For example, for a reading assignment, students were normally assigned readings and then asked to answer several comprehension or analysis questions, either individually or through "pair-share" strategies. But when adapted tools utilizing product criteria were implemented throughout the readings, students were guided with strategies for pulling out key points to improve comprehension, such as note taking in various graphic organizer formats and intermittent class discussions. At the end of the readings, students will be provided with sentence frames using academic language to reinforce and discuss main ideas, supporting details, big ideas, themes, etc. And instead of assigning writing tasks by orally explaining them to students and then giving instructions via the white board, document camera and/or handouts, students were guided through explicit instruction and given a wide variety of scaffolding materials.

For the major writing assignment that seniors were assigned throughout the duration of the research, students were first given handouts that provided brainstorming activities for possible writing topics and then sample papers that clearly labeled the significance of each section. Next, outlines/checklists for writing were provided, as well as a simple writing frame created specifically for the type of writing task (see Appendix 5 for sample), with academic language in the frame. Students were also given several handouts that give tips for good writing strategies to make their writing more unique. For less complex writing assignments, students were provided with sentence frames and/or outlines to be used as a foundation or a guide for writing. For all summative writing frames, students were expected to transfer the entire finished

work onto a blank sheet of paper or onto a Microsoft Word document to reinforce and practice good writing structure (see Appendices 5A and 5B for samples). For vocabulary lessons, students normally were provided with vocabulary word lists at the start of each week and instructed to copy down the definitions and write two sentences on their own. This was augmented by providing handouts which will provide a synonym and antonym (if available), a definition frame, a sample sentence with each vocabulary word with context clues, and two sentence frames— one with context clues and one without— in which the students could demonstrate their knowledge by using correct word choice.

For summative assessments that require significant recall (e.g.; fill-in-the-blank tests), students were given an adapted version which gave them multiple choice options, word banks, matching questions, and sentence frames with context clues. These options were designed to assist students with difficulty in recall and the creative process. For example, on a vocabulary test, the teacher may have listed twelve vocabulary words and asked students to write in their definitions and come up with five sentences using the words. Instead, an adapted test may have two chunks of five words each, with a word bank, matching, or multiple choice options. Then five sentence frames with context clues would be provided that demonstrates a student's knowledge of how to use the word in a sentence.

For math assignments, various adaptive tools were brought into play. Students were provided with reference sheets that provided easy-to-find information. For example, one of the key tools utilized in the research was a "factor list" that I created (see Appendix 1). This listed all of the factors for the numbers 1-100. The purpose of providing students with this tool was to allow them to find factors of one number or common factors of several numbers to help solve

algebraic equations. Additionally, it allowed students to quickly and correctly identify factors and be able to move on to the actual process of solving problems. Another adaptive tool developed was visual, step-by-step guides to solving algebraic problems. These tools took students through the steps of solving problems through a visual means. Some of these had provided sample problems with essential key vocabulary definitions and models, as well as guides to enable the students to work through the problems one step at a time.

Data sources and instruments

Throughout the duration of this study, data were collected in various ways to address both research questions: *(1) What is the impact of using adapted assessment for students with mild-moderate disabilities with respect to their academic success and attitude toward learning, from the perspective of their general and special education classroom teachers? And (2) How does using adapted assessment impact on mild-moderate special education students' attitude towards learning, including their perceptions of their own academic success?* The methods I used included both quantitative and qualitative data sources.

Quantitative data. Qualitative data will include student surveys. Students were asked to complete "post-assessment surveys" upon the completion of each adapted assessment, which were a form of immediate feedback (see Appendix 6 for sample). These surveys asked students to rate various aspects of the assessment on a Likert scale of 1-5. Ratings included questions such as how useful the adapted assessment instrument was (i.e.; if it helped them understand the assignment better). Students were allotted five to ten minutes to complete these brief surveys and were instructed to not write their names on surveys in an effort to increase internal validity.

Qualitative data. Individual and group interviews with students were held throughout the research, as well as interviews with the GE teacher-participant. These interviews were audio-recorded for accuracy and reference. I also kept a reflective teaching journal.

Individual interviews. A random sample of nine students was selected to be individually interviewed for a total of three times each, with four students interviewing only twice. Interviews were no less than five minutes in length. Students were asked open-ended questions such as "What helps you succeed in English?" and "I used this particular tool… Can you tell me if or how it helped you?" and "How confident do you feel in writing with these tools and why?" I will ask more open-ended and probing questions based on their responses.

Group interviews. Group interviews were held in random clusters, and each cluster was interviewed for a minimum of 10 minutes, for a total of eight times throughout the research. These group interviews were in a seminar format in which norms are reviewed prior to the seminar, to allow for maximum respect and reflection in their thought processes. Interviews took place throughout the duration of the research. Clusters were random, but students were mostly grouped according to common classes in which they were enrolled. One cluster was comprised of four students that were all in the same senior English class, one cluster was of only two students in the same Algebra class, one cluster had various different teachers but similar adaptations. There were two interviews in which different clusters from the same English class participated. Questions included those from individual interviews, as well as questions pertaining to their self-efficacy, such as, "How fair do you perceive these adapted assessments?;" "What is it like being a special education student in a general education academic class?;" "How has your experience been with these assessment tools?;" "Tell me about my interaction with you. Do you

feel as if I am holding you back?;" and "Do you feel more confident as a high school student when provided tools such as these?" Students were provided samples of both adapted and unadapted assessment in the middle of the table to assist them in recall. Interviews were transcribed, and this data was analyzed, coded, and summarized for interpretation.

GE teacher-participant interview. I conducted two formal interviews with the GE teacher. These interviews were no less than 20 minutes in length each. The first interview took place in the middle of the study, and the second at the end. I had several questions, both closed- and open-ended. These questions included some related to those above, such as, "How do you feel about the adapted instrument tools?;" "Do you perceive these adapted assessments as helpful or as a hindrance?;" "Do you feel these students have experienced more success than they would if the adapted instruments were not available to them?;" and, "Would you use these tools in the future with special populations?"

Reflective teaching journal. I kept a daily journal of how I implemented my research into practice each day. In this journal, I tracked assessments assigned by the GE Teacher, as well as adapted instruments that I implemented. I took note of how both were introduced, and what seemed to work for each of them. I shared success stories, as well as difficulties encountered. Student observations in regards to motivational levels, effort put forth, and feedback or comments of interest will all be noted.

Work samples. I collected samples of student work for each adapted assessment. I also collected several non-adapted assessments from their GE peers, as a reference or baseline of the original assignment. For these samples, I collected work from high, medium, and low

performance levels. I expected to find that with the adapted assessments, the students will be able to reach similar scores to their GE peers.

Data Analysis

Throughout the data collection process, I analyzed data and looked for recurring themes and possible deficiencies in the research as well as for ways to improve the adapted measurement tools in order for the students to attain maximum benefits from the plan.

Quantitative data. Throughout the research, I collected post-assessment surveys (see Appendix 6 for sample). I immediately examined these "post-assessment surveys," and input responses and ratings into an Excel spreadsheet. From this data, I developed tables with average ratings of responses. In addition, I coded student responses into themes and developed a table with a checklist of student responses.

Qualitative data. I first transcribed all my interviews, surveys, and my reflective teaching journal to prepare them for analysis (see Appendices 7A and 7B for sample transcriptions). I then read all documents and coded them. Initially, I used codes derived from my research questions, but was on alert for emergent codes suggested by the data as I reviewed each document. As documents were coded, I continually reviewed and revised my list of codes to combine redundant codes and add new codes as necessary. I then began looking at which combinations of codes suggest overall patterns in each data source, especially which suggested patterns across the different data sources. These emergent patterns were analyzed, compared, and revised repeatedly to determine which best fit the entire range of data; the final patterns were used to answer the research questions.

For interviews conducted with the teacher, I employed member-checking to enhance internal validity; that is, I asked the interviewed individuals to review their interview transcript and confirm that their thoughts were recorded accurately. If needed, held follow-up interviews for any points of clarification or need for elaboration. Following analysis of all data, I dovetailed the findings from all of my quantitative and qualitative data to answer my research questions.

Limitations

The sample size of this study was small, with only 18 student-participants and 2 teacher-participants and two subject areas. Teachers at the site had minimal professional development in the area of co-teaching with no allotted planning time between teachers. There was also minimal professional development for both GE and SPED teachers on how to effectively implement a full inclusion model and work with traditional SDC students in accessing GE curriculum. Limitations will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

This chapter has provided a description of how the research will be carried out. Chapter 4 will present the qualitative and quantitative data results.

CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter describes the results of my study of implementing adapted assessment instruments for students with M/M disabilities based on the following research questions: *1) What is the impact of using adapted measurement tools for students with mild-moderate - disabilities with respect to their academic success from the perspective of their general education classroom teacher?* and *2) How does using adapted measurement tools impact on mild-moderate special education students' attitude towards learning, including their perceptions of their own academic success?*

Throughout the research, I collected qualitative and quantitative data which I then divided into themes. In this chapter, I will discuss those themes and the results of the implementation of adapted assessment instruments, and the process prior to the implementation.

Implementation of adapted assessment

As I began the planning process of creating adapted assessment tools, I was faced with one of my most difficult and frustrating challenges of executing the study: coordinating the lesson plans with the GE teachers. Between testing, time constraints, and unforeseen personal conflicting philosophies regarding the fairness of adaptations, I embarked on this study with an expanded newfound journey on social justice for special education students. In planning with GE teachers, I found that some teachers were much more willing to make adaptations than others. I was met with great receptiveness from one teacher, while I was met with challenges from another.

The duration of the study required extensive planning. The most important step in the execution was collaborating and coordinating with GE teachers. While I have one preparation period during the six-period day, it does not line up with the preparation periods of the other GE teachers with whom I share common students. This was one of my biggest challenges, so every day, I found myself scurrying to meet with or email the other teachers to find out what they were planning for the upcoming days. With the uncertainty of class pace and the other demands of being teachers, I found it difficult to get assignments or assessments far enough in advance to plan well-thought out adapted tools. Although I wanted to use adapted tools every day throughout the duration of the study, I was only able to use them on an average of every other day, to meet the demands of my caseload, which I must monitor closely, all of whom could be in one of about twelve given classes during one 55-minute period.

In the execution of the study, to begin the planning process of each adapted tool, Mrs. Smith would share her lesson plans with me and share the assignments that she planned on giving the students. Having taught algebra exclusively to students with SPED services before, I was keenly aware of student learning needs and the scaffolding processes required in order for learning to take place. From our discussion and her assignments and assessments, I created tools that I felt would be helpful in order for the students to learn from and complete with little to no assistance.

On the first day of presenting the adapted assignments and getting feedback from Ms. Smith, I was reminded that every teacher has a different teaching method and style. This came to surface when Ms. Smith informed me that the "students did not know what the arrows meant," referring to the arrows that I drew on their adapted assignments on multiplying polynomials.

When I taught this concept in the past, I taught it by drawing arrows from the outside term to each of the terms on the inside of the parentheses indicating distribution/multiplication of terms. After this discussion, I made sure that when she presented the assignments to me, I had her explain it in the way she would explain it to the students, as every teacher has a different teaching method or style and I wanted to ensure that the students would understand the adaptation. If I felt that I had an idea that, perhaps, would help the students understand the concept-at-hand better; I shared that with Ms. Smith and asked her if she would be willing to share it in her lesson planning.

Data Analysis

Findings

In this section, I will describe my findings pertaining to the impact of how adapted measurement tools impact the academic success and affect of students with M/M disabilities. My first research question, pertaining to the impact of the tools on the student's academic success, from the perspective of their GE teacher, and the second research question on how using adapted measurement tools impact on student attitude toward learning, including their perceptions of their own academic success, together brought about three major themes: *1) Adapted tools improve attitude and induce greater effort by students than traditional assessment; 2) Adapted assessment and instructional tools can be essential to learning; 3) Students have a greater sense of success, confidence, and in turn, develop a greater sense of self-efficacy when adaptations are implemented.*

Quantitative Findings.

Post-Assessment Surveys. Surveys were provided to students immediately following adapted assessment. Students were provided with adapted and unadapted versions of each

assessment, then asked to rate their confidence in each of the statements below. The number of responses to each item (N=56) is listed in the tables below:

Table 1

Student self-reported confidence ratings toward adapted assessment.

	Confidence rating					
	1 *Poor*	**2** *Fair*	**3** *Good*	**4** *Very good*	**5** *Excellent*	**X** Average
My confidence level WITHOUT using the adaptation *	29	25	6	1	0	**1.65**
My confidence level, after using the adaptation	0	3	12	27	19	**4.02**
My effort level WITHOUT the adaptation	22	27	9	3	0	**1.89**
My effort level WITH the adaptation	0	2	15	19	25	**4.09**

*Lower ratings indicate a positive response.

Table 2

Student self-reported attitude ratings toward adapted assessment

	Attitude Rating					
	1 ***Strongly disagree***	**2** ***Somewhat disagree***	**3** ***Neither agree nor disagree***	**4** ***Somewhat agree***	**5** ***Agree***	**X** **Average**
The adaptation made the assignment more difficult to understand.*	50	8	2	1	0	**1.65**
This tool made the assignment too easy.	39	16	4	2	0	**4.02**
This adaptation was helpful	0	0	3	19	39	**1.89**
This helped me understand the assignment better	0	1	4	20	36	**4.09**
This tool makes me feel that I can do better in school	0	2	6	21	32	**1.24**
I feel this can make me a more successful student	0	3	7	19	32	**1.49**
I learned more using this adaptation	0	1	3	16	41	**4.59**
I would like to use adapted tools such as this on other assignments	0	1	6	14	40	**4.49**
Overall, I feel this tool fit my needs	0	0	5	14	42	**4.36**

*Lower ratings indicate a positive response.

Commonalities during interviews. Throughout the interviews, there were several comments that students made indicating different aspects of the themes mentioned above. These themes were coded and then tallied in the table below. Most of the students indicated that they would respond positively to the indices below in their post-assessment surveys or during

informal conversation; however, the table below indicates whether these themes came up during interviews.

Table 3

Common Responses Regarding Adaptations During Interviews

Student	Useful	Simplified Task	Reduced Frustration	Improved Ease	Provided Access to Curriculum	Increased Confidence	Increased Effort	Assisted in Recall	Completed assignment vs. turning in blank	Expressed adaptations were fair	Improved Learning Experience
1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x
3	x	x	x		x	x					x
4	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
5	x						x				x
6	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
7		x		x		x	x	x			x
8		x		x						x	
9	x	x	x	x			x		x	x	x
10	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x
11	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
12	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	
13	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
14	x	x	x			x	x	x		x	x
15	x	x		x		x		x			
16	x			x							
17	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x
18	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x

The data collected in the table above indicated that overall, the adapted instruction and assessment were beneficial to the students. In the qualitative findings section below, these responses will go into greater detail and the most common and thought-provoking quotes form

the interviews will be noted. Analysis and discussion of this data will be discussed in chapter five.

Qualitative Findings.

Adapted tools improve attitude and induce greater effort by students than traditional assessment. Adapted tools are designed to start at the lowest level of competency determined by knowledge of student needs. Assuming that the student to whom the tool is being presented has not mastered many of the prerequisite skills of the concept, the tool serves as a scaffolded instructional tool as well as an assessment of the concept itself. Accordingly, the tools are broken down into micro-units that take the students through each process of the task, one step at a time. As fully included students in GE CP classrooms, most of the instructional and assessment demand is beyond their skill level, thus the rigor becomes too much for them to process. In creating the adapted tools, I took these thoughts into consideration and broke down the material into the smallest and simplest steps which I deemed appropriate based on my background knowledge of their psychological and academic skill levels.

Throughout the duration of the study, one of the strongest distinctions between the adapted tools and the original versions was that the students obviously put forth much greater effort on the adapted tools than they would have with the original assessment. Mrs. Smith explained how one of the math adaptations with "hint boxes" and visual directions helped one of the students:

> So for example, one of the students—before, he would not even try to do the tests at all. He would just see the work and claim, "I have no idea what this is. I don't even know where to start." He wouldn't even write anything on the paper. But he came in, and instead of sitting down there and sleeping—he actually—you see, he didn't get

> everything right—but he tried. He had an idea. So that is what I'm looking for—but this for him is a huge improvement. Without any question asked, without anything, he just came and started. And then by the time I go to him, he was already working and trying his test.

During one of the group interviews, when asked about how confident students felt on a scale of 1-10 when given unadapted assignments, one student replied, "a three, because I don't know if I could like, do it or not, so I just like, look at the paper and think 'ah man, I'm not gonna do this.'" Other students echoed similar feelings throughout most interviews.

The group of senior students in the study were given, what I referred to as their "capstone Senior Paper:" an essay in which they had to obtain information from multiple sources on a topic of their choice, and create a six to eight page essay in which they had to synthesize the information. The essay had numerous requirements, ranging from requirements pertaining to the number of sources, guidelines for structure, as well as having to be in MLA format. For this, I created several adapted tools and did intensive individual and small group instruction over the course of a month and a half. Adapted tools included guidelines for obtaining research and samples of index cards required for each bit of information, guidelines and a handout how to categorize those cards, an example of an outline along with an outline tool which they could use as a guide for their own, a handout with the basic formatting requirements with examples as well as a scaffolded writing tool that included sentence and paragraph frames with instructions; all coupled with continuous, intensive, explicit, direct instruction. As I noted in my journal, all students who were given these materials worked very hard at completing their essays and, displayed independence and in some cases, exhibited the most effort I have ever witnessed out of

them. All data collected pointed out that students recognized the difference between the original and the adapted versions of the assessments, and were much more willing to put forth the effort necessary to complete the adapted tasks than the original versions. One student said, "It gives me like a better understanding of what I have to do and I'll put more effort in trying," after he had stated that without the adaptations, "I wouldn't even do it if I wanted. . ." Another student expressed, that with the adaptations, "It [my confidence] actually goes up because I would actually try [when given the adaptations] and it would be a lot easier to write down the, get the information down and easier to make the paragraph, like finish the essay." All students were in agreement that with the adaptations, they would try harder because the tools make the assignment easier to understand. Moreover, one student stated expressed that the tools provided them with guidance that they needed in order to make sense of the information they gathered; "It is easier for understanding and you can figure out how to do the writing better, then you can prove what you need to a lot better," she said. As I noted in my reflections:

> GE teachers have mixed feelings about adapted instructional tools such as writing frames. Some feel that they give an unfair advantage and lower the standard of expectation or make it too easy. Many of the others use them all the time for their entire class, and make them available to students who need them.

Weeks after I noted this in my journal, a GE teacher emailed me telling me that she had seen the adapted writing frame in the copy machine. She went on to request that I send her a copy of the tool so she could use it with her (entire) GE English class for a current writing assignment. I was more than happy to share this tool, along with other tools I had created in the past, for the assignment she wanted to use it for; however, this furthered my frustrations with the

inconsistencies within departments and among different teacher in regards to fairness. Hence, I posed questions about the adaptations to the students asking them whether they believed the writing frames made the assignment too easy. One student responded, "it doesn't make it too easy but it's like just right for you to understand it and know what to do than not having it at all, as in, like, you don't know what you're supposed to write about [without it]." Most students voiced that they were putting forth much more effort with the assistance of the tools. One pronounced, "I am actually trying with it . . . it's just right for you to understand it and know what to do than not having it at all as in [as opposed to] you don't even know what you're supposed to write about." Another student replied that without it, "I would probably get stuck... and be like, 'I do not understand,'" and that the adapted tool, "gives me a better understanding of what I have to do and I'll put more effort into trying. . . it's easier to understand..." Furthermore, I noted in my reflections that

> . . . it's so hard for them to get their writing started sometimes and maintain structure. I think these tools are employing them with the visual organization structure they need to get started. . . [Student X] tried so hard today, it was great to see him get going and maintain his effort throughout the period.

In accordance with my reflections, one student proclaimed, "It helps you get started pretty quick," while another student added, "It like helps you understand what's supposedly in the paragraph. How to start it off, how to end it and everything." Moreover, students added that they did not feel completely confident in their capabilities of developing sentences or paragraphs: "Like I can [write sentences or paragraphs], but it won't—it won't look as good as when you

write it down [provide us with the frames]. Then [with the frames], it makes a lot more sense than if it would try to write it [without]."

Mrs. Smith seemed to think they were fair adaptations. Mrs. Smith's comments in response to the question, "Do you feel as if these tools are helpful or a hindrance?" provide further belief that the adaptations are fair and appropriate:

> I see it as very helpful. So far, even the lowest student is able to work without much guidance. They can start the work instead of just sitting down there staring. They're able to say, 'Okay, I can start from here and go to here.' They still do have questions because they still need to be able to understand the whole concept to work with the tool. But they can at least self-start, instead of just sitting down and staring, they are able to know, 'Okay, this looks familiar. I have the examples here. I have the hint here.' So it provides them with that additional support that they would have to wait for someone to point out to them. . . In fact, I don't see them as unfair because—I think it more or less brings a little level to the playing field for these students. . .

Adapted assessment and instructional tools can be essential to learning. Many of the tools used were given with consideration to the academic gaps that SPED students often possess. Hence, there were several handouts that were given as supplements to the adapted assessments to serve as instructional tools. For example, on an algebra assignment requiring students to factor quadratics, an additional handout was given, which was a factor list that I created with a list of factors for all numbers from 1-100. Many students at this level have proven that they can solve an algebraic equation, but they have difficulty memorizing basic addition, subtraction, multiplication, and/or division problems. This factor list serves to fill that gap while

meeting the standard of solving complex equations. While some do catch on to concepts such as solving algebraic equations faster than others, others must have these concepts broken down and be able to practice them repeatedly in order to master them. Consequently, many of the adapted tools were step-by-step guides meant for formative assessment, in order to better prepare the students for summative assessment and ultimately, mastery. Instead of the general education teacher, an instructional aide, or me leaning over the students' shoulders, these tools were meant to serve as a guide for students to learn and practice more independently.

After given a formative math assessment with hints and a supplemental handout, students expressed that these tools served as useful instructional tools, also lessened the level of assistance they required from the teacher or instructional aide. Without the adapted tools, one student stated, "I wouldn't [have] done it." He did state that he would ask for help, but said that with the adapted tools, he completed it without having to ask for help. "I have a better chance to do it with it. And without it, I wouldn't. [The adapted tools are] like extra help, like, [with] what it means."

Likewise, in their English class, seniors were given a seven page reading assignment to complete in twenty minutes, and then were presented with open-ended comprehension questions in which they could refer to their packets to complete. Upon finishing reading, students were given the original version of the assessment with open-ended questions. They were unsuccessful on any of the items. As an intervention, a twenty-minute, intensive small-group instruction session took place. Certain excerpts from the passage were read by the teacher, while students highlighted. Next, students were given an adapted assessment with cloze activities [similar to writing frames], which they presented 1:1 with the teacher upon completion. All students were

successful in completing the adapted assessment. About this adaptation, one student explained, "By now [with the adaptations], I actually understand what you're—what she's [the teacher's] looking for. In the paper that we're doing than before, I actually didn't know what she wanted on it. Because on the one she gave me, it like doesn't have any details to let me know what I'm looking for." He added that he felt as if the adaptations helped facilitate his understanding of the topic. These comments triggered a conversation that I had noted in my journal with Mrs. Smith (their math teacher). She asked me why the students didn't use their notes on assessments. I asked the students this particular question. One responded that he would try to find where he put the notes in his notebook, but had difficulty finding the right ones. Then he said that he figured that maybe he just missed those notes, in which case, on the test, "I wouldn't [have] done it, I [would] just skip it and I would have failed the test." This student also added that a peer partner and the instructional aide were helpful when he needed extra guidance.

Often during the interviews, students would acknowledge feelings of being different than their GE peers, and some were very insightful in their feelings about their learning differences. One student said he felt that being a student in SPED made him different, "because like we ain't smarter like the other guys. . ." Other students said it was embarrassing because oftentimes they cannot complete the same work as GE students. One student articulated, "Yeah, it's like easy [for general education students]. Like, they'll get right into it. They already know what to do and everything. But when it comes to me, I'll just stand there and look at the page cause I wouldn't know what to do cause I don't understand." Other students expressed that it took them longer to complete assignments than GE students and they usually needed extra time: "it but it takes me longer to finish it. Like longer than them [the GE students]. They finish right away." Another

student added to this thought, "It takes me longer and also if I have to read a question, and I don't understand it, I go almost brain dead cause I get frustrated. . ." During this group interview, all students were in expressed and were in agreement that they would be more successful if given extra time to work on assessments, which was similar to one my reflections:

> It seems like the students are always trying to play catch-up, and always trying to keep up with the rest of the class. Tasks that GE students are able to master easily are extremely time-consuming and challenging for many students with IEPs. Thus, providing these students with adaptations is also providing them equal opportunity.

As I noted several times in my reflective teaching journal, oftentimes, adapted tools can be perceived by GE teachers or students as an unfair advantage. I also noted that one GE teacher said, "it's not fair that a SPED student can get all these accommodations, and can still get the same grade as a student that doesn't get them." When I asked the students about whether or not they thought adaptations were fair, many thoughtful responses were produced. One student said, "you know? It's going to help us. Cause we're not like the same as the others but we're also taking the tests the same way as them too . . . we also have to understand that that's the reason we have this class [SPED service]." Another student said, "[the adaptations] help. . . [the adaptations are] pushing me instead and that's a good thing . . . because [they] help me... and without it I wouldn't be able to do my work, and that is not fair." Likewise, another student made the following comments about not having adaptations available: "I wouldn't be able to get nowhere. . . [and] I wouldn't have been able to keep up in class . . . because they're complicated for me. . . [I try] really hard, and then I get frustrated and I never finish it. [The adaptations] break it up to two pieces and makes it easier for me to work. . . It just makes me think that I have

more focus on it." In my journal, I noted that this particular student has a history of behavioral problems, usually when presented with difficult tasks. He said that when he gets assignments that are too difficult, "I don't really do work in class, [and I] walk around in class. Get frustrated." On the other hand, when given adapted assignments, he said, "[I] try the hardest I can to finish it . . . focus more." He then expressed that he thought his behavior was better when he was presented with adaptive tools. Additionally, he said that without adaptations, he probably wouldn't be able to pass his classes or graduate.

After observing many times during instruction in a GE class, I noted in my journal that I didn't feel that all GE teachers always knew what students with SPED services needed in regards to concept mastery. In one of my entries, I noted,

> . . . I wish the class could slow down because that not all of the students are going to understand what they need to do when [the teacher] just tells them. The students need to see models and examples; they need to see how it's done, step by step. They need to practice. They need feedback before they are 'thrown to the wolves' and expected to just do it, and then be graded on it before they even have the slightest understanding of the concept. Some of their GE peers don't need any of that, so it's really difficult to suit the needs for students both ends of the spectrum. . .

This was a recurring thought of mine throughout the duration of the study. It was evident among the students also; in their body language during instruction, when given tasks to complete, and as they expressed in the interviews and during casual conversation with them. I could tell that they didn't learn prior to assessment, and I noted thoughts such as, "There is no way that [Student X]

is going to understand what [the teacher] expects. [The teacher] is giving them an assignment from an Honors level course with no instruction prior to it." I also noted:

> . . . the students are having such a hard time. I don't think the teacher always remembers that many of the kids have auditory processing deficits and probably won't get the directions if they are only presented verbally. They all looked zoned out when [the teacher] is explaining them. Some of the GE students even looked lost— especially the ELLs.

Many of the students did have the same thoughts, as I had predicted. One student said, "The hardest thing about that is that [the instructions are that they are] verbal, and like seeing and telling is way different. Like seeing, you can actually look at what [the teacher is] doing, and like getting a clue of what [the teacher is] doing. But telling you is like, 'all right, you want me to do this, but then how would you want it? Like which way would you want me to write it? Or what kind of essay?'" Another student expressed similar thoughts: "I'd rather have it [the directions] on paper because I have trouble remembering stuff that's only up there [on a PowerPoint presentation] for like maybe five minutes and then off. Then you go home and you forget about it. . ." When asked what it was like to be a student with SPED services in a GE class, another student expressed:

> to be a Special Educational student in a class? A Regular Ed. class is that it's difficult and— its just harder to learn with the like Regular Ed students, and—they're —they know what [the teacher] is like talking about and stuff. And I'm kind of just lost in the process of [the teacher's] instructions. And [the teacher] doesn't always break it down to us...

On the contrary, this student added that some teachers do break it down, but not all of them.

Adapted tools that included examples proved to be helpful for all students interviewed. These tools provided visual examples of concepts for subjects such as math or writing. One student replied that she felt she was most successful when she got, ". . . an example problem first, and then I get it." Likewise, when another student was given a formative math assessment with "hint boxes" that included key vocabulary, sample problems with step-by-step instructions, it was much easier for them to complete: "Yeah, the [original] question doesn't tell me like how to [do it]; it just tell[s] me . . . like, what . . . the problem [is]. With [the] adaptation, it tells me how to do it like how to find it, what to do second, what to do third, to find the answer." Another student with a working memory deficits added that the "hint" boxes on the formative assessments were helpful: ". . . if it gave me just like little hints, I probably could catch on the hint and be able to refresh my memory, or something." Mrs. Smith felt the adaptations helped refresh student memory as well when she said:

> . . . they have the confidence to use it [the adaptation] to help them realize, 'I know what this is.' With the hints they can move on through the work without that initial support. But a few of them still need to understand what the concept is all about. 'Why am I doing this? Okay, what comes next?' or 'Do I know how to multiply?' They need to know that part as well. But it provides them with success in the fact that they're now able to start on their own. They're now able to push themselves. They're now able to feel like, 'Okay, I can do this. I'll start somewhere.' It may not always be the right answer, but at least they're heading somewhere and that helps you. For me, it helps me know where they actually are lacking. Because if they can start, they can head in one direction. Then I

> can say, 'Oh, this is what he thinks of this. Now let's redirect.' So it does provide them success in that aspect. And myself as well. It helps me realize now, instead of saying, 'I don't know anything,' I know where they need the support. Because they do know something. And this proves that they do know something. Now, where can I help get them the rest of the way?

Intensive, individualized or small group instruction is another instructional strategy that was employed throughout the duration of the study. After one student expressed that she was embarrassed when she got "pulled out" for intensive instruction or to take a test, I asked the students whether they thought being pulled out improved their learning. One student replied, "Oh my gosh, yes," and another student piggybacked on that response saying, "yeah, cause they go a lot faster. . . [and] you break it down to us. . . and [we] get a better grade." On the other hand, most students did acknowledge that they felt different than their GE peers when they were "pulled out," and that seemed to be emotionally difficult for many of them. One student said, "It's kind of hard . . . it's not easy cause . . . when you walk out, everyone's just looking at you." Another student echoed that response, "Sometimes it feels harder on me because—they stare and it's, like, very uncomfortable." Another student had similar feelings, but sounded like he was slightly more comfortable with leaving the classroom, but frustrated with the body language of his GE peers: "it's kind of hard because like everyone stares at me when I walk out, and it's like, just cause I'm going away or something doesn't mean I'm any different with you guys. Kind of like, it's kind of hard to come in here sometimes because I don't like it when people stare at me. It just gets me mad cause—just cause I have a disability doesn't mean I'm any different. I don't learn—just cause I don't learn the same as you doesn't mean I'm different."

While many SPED students often have difficulty with multi-step directions, they also often lack the background knowledge essential to completing a grade-level task. For example, a student with a disability in math calculation stated, ". . .math is kind of easier because like you could use a calculator compared to then just doing it in your head and then showing the work, cause you could forget the steps on your work and you're just like, 'aw, crap.' And then when you have a calculator right there you could just type in the numbers and just be like, 'Oh, yeah, you have to do this and this.' And then just get your answer." After this student made this comment, I made the following note in my journal:

> a simple tool like a calculator can make a world of difference in their success. I wish more students would remember to use their calculator. Sometimes I see them try to solve multi-step algebraic problems, and they have all the steps down, but then make mistakes on the simple things like 10 minus 6, and end up getting the whole problem wrong. How frustrating that must be.

Correspondingly, on another day, I noted:

> I worked with [Student X] on factoring quadratic expressions. She totally understands the concept, but gets stuck on finding the correct factors. She had the calculator and her factor list right in front of her but kept on guessing until she got frustrated and gave up. I asked her why she didn't use her factor list or calculator, and she said, 'oh, I forgot.' . . . If only I could find a way for them to remember to utilize the tools they need in order to experience success.

In taking all of this information into consideration, it seems plain and clear that students often need adaptations, ranging from basic IEP accommodations such as calculators to more

complex and less readily presented or less readily attainable adaptations such as multi-modal instruction.

Students have a greater sense of success, confidence, and in turn, develop a greater sense of self-efficacy when adaptations are implemented. Overall, results indicated that students were more successful and developed more confidence in their academic abilities. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy seems to be an extremely fitting term for the outcome of the implementation of the tools. All results indicated that with the adaptive tools, students felt more capable in executing the courses of action required to complete tasks.

Mrs. Smith expressed that she observed students feeling of capability of completing assessments improve when given adapted tools, and saw an increase in academic success in the form of a grade as a result. She said:

> [Without the adaptations] the students that we used the tools for, they wouldn't even start. But with the tool available, they were able to realize, 'This is what I need to get started on.' And it helped them start the work and some people that will usually get a 0, *constant 0's*, they go like 60%, 40%, 0 to 40%, that's an improvement. 0 is nothing, 40% is definitely something. So yes, there is improvement in the grades. The support is good.

Students had similar observations to Mrs. Smith. When questions were posed to the students such as, "Without the adaptation, do you feel as if you could do the entire assignment and get a good grade?" students overwhelmingly responded with statements such as, "No. . . I have a better chance to do it with it [the adaptation]. And without it, I wouldn't." Another response was, "[I try] really hard [on unadapted assignments], and then I get frustrated and I never finish it . . . because they are too complicated for me—[but with the adaptation], I try the hardest I can to

finish it [and] focus more." Likewise, when asked about the level of difficulty of regular, unadapted assignments, students most often replied that these assignments were very difficult for them. Many students, particularly the English Language Learners, made statements such as, "... the words—sometimes they're, like, big, and I don't get them." Another student stated, "It's harder for us [students with SPED services], [to] like, understand the words. It's harder to just, like, look for the answers." Evidently, the administration of these adaptations instilled a belief amongst the students that they were much more capable of completing the adapted assessments, clearly contrasting to their perceptions regarding their capability of completing the versions of assessment without adaptive tools. Mrs. Smith agreed:

> It will lessen the support that we'll need to give to students during instruction, but my main concern is not really, 'Do I want less time in providing support?' No. My concern is I need for them to build a confidence level. This tool will help them. These adaptation tools will help them build that confidence level. So we still want to support them. I don't want to take that time away from them. However, I want them to own their own learning experience. I want them to be able to use that to help push them so they know that, 'I can do this. I know where I'm headed. . .' But yes, it will help because I can, myself and Ms. Suzie [the instructional aide], or whoever is here with me, can get around to the students more. But my major concern is I need them to boost their confidence level. . .

Similarly, when asked the question, "Do you feel that if these students used these tools year round, their grades would improve?" Mrs. Smith added:

> Oh yes. Oh yes. I believe so. I believe so. If it's something, a tool that they know is available to them, and they use it constantly with different topics, they will get, it will

> have their thought process more in tune with, 'Okay, let's push to the next level. Let's go to the next level.' Yes. I think it would definitely make them more successful, and all around, yes—have confidence.

Another question was posed about current group work the students were participating in throughout the duration of reading a novel in their English class. The students were to read the novel during class time along with the audio version. The students were then asked to get into groups which they chose as the start of the novel and answer a five to eight question assessment at the conclusion of the chapter with their groups. These questions were much deeper than surface level comprehension questions; they require deep-level thinking skills, reflection, and insight. In my reflective teaching journal, I noted that many of the students with SPED services did not seem to understand the text because of the complexity and the outdated language and writing style. Despite the audio being played simultaneously to the reading, it appeared that many of the students, SPED and GE, were "lost." During the administration of this assessment, my thoughts were validated. The students with SPED services heavily, if not fully, relied on their GE peers to answer the questions. During a group interview, the issue of group work came up. Students expressed that they did fell more confident when working in groups, but then revealed that it was because they were "sharing" answers, and that most of the time they would not remember the answers that were "shared." When posed the question of how they would perform successfully if they were to take the assessment individually, the students had replies such as, "no," and "not that much," and "fail." No responses indicated that they would be able to answer all of the questions independently. One student explained himself and said, ". . . the words sometimes they're like, big, and I don't get them." Others noted that it was embarrassing to be a

student with SPED services in a GE class when given assignments such as this, and one said, "It's embarrassing for me cause I can't really read." This led me to believe that the students needed additional instruction on the text, especially when considering that many of these students have extremely weak reading and listening comprehension skills, compounded with many having limited vocabulary and attention deficits. Consequently, I gathered and developed some adapted instructional tools to enhance their learning. These included having the students chorally read selected excerpts from the text then discussing them, completing basic comprehension cloze activities together, and reading simplified text together, coupled with interactive discussion. After being given small group instruction with these tools, the students expressed that the tools and instruction enhanced their learning experience. One student stated, "I get, the like, the stuff that you're like teaching," and another student added, ". . . they're simpler words . . . and it's easier because it's broken down to us."

Summary

This chapter discussed the data and results of the research. Students mostly responded positively to the adapted measurement tools. They made statements that indicated they put more effort than they would have without the tools. In addition, many responses indicated that it reduced student frustration, which made it easier for them to understand, get started on and independently complete assignments. Discussion and interpretation of the data will follow in Chapter 5, along with the limitations of the research and a plan of action.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion, Limitations, Action Plan

Findings

The data in this study answer my research questions clearly. The purpose of the research was to examine *1) What is the impact of using adapted measurement tools for students with mild-moderate disabilities with respect to their academic success from the perspective of their general education classroom teacher?* and *2) How does using adapted measurement tools impact on mild-moderate special education students' attitude towards learning, including their perceptions of their own academic success*? Interviews and post-assessment surveys paralleled GE teacher-participant responses and my observations. The most significant discoveries will be discussed below, and placed in four major answer categories: 1) *Adaptations increase effort and make students feel successful;* 2) *Adaptations reduce frustration and allow students to work at their zone of proximal development (ZPD);* 3) *Adaptations provide a fair avenue to foster learning; and* 4) *Adaptations improve confidence and build self-efficacy.*

Adaptations increase effort and make students feel successful. In accordance with this the qualitative findings, the post-assessment surveys indicated that the adapted tools made most students feel as if they could do better in school, and be more successful students. Students rated both statements between "somewhat agree" and "agree," "This tool makes me feel that I can do better in school" scoring an average rating of 4.36, and, "I feel this can make me a more successful student" with an average rating of 4.31. These results coincided with responses during interviews such as one student's comment that she would do better in school if given adaptations more often because, ". . . it's easier to get the work done and it's helpful." It was

evident that this was partly due to a reduced frustration. Furthermore, several students commented that they perform poorly when given assignments that are too difficult. For example, the same student added that when she is given assignments that are not scaffolded to her needs, "I can't focus it . . . it starts like, hurting my head so I finally, like, just give up on it." Likewise, another student stated, "It takes me longer and also if I have to read a question and I don't understand it, I go almost brain dead cause I get frustrated. . . " However, when provided with the adaptations, students said things like, "it gives me like a better understanding of what I have to do and I'll put more effort in trying." These statements were in accordance with my observations, as well as Mrs. Smith's. Additionally, the increase in effort with the adaptations was apparent on the post-assessment surveys, where the students rated their effort with and without the adaptations. The students' average rating of "effort level *without* the adaptation" was 1.89, falling between "poor" and "fair." The average rating of "Effort level *with* the adaption" was 4.09, falling between "very good" and "excellent." Given these ratings, it can be determined that student effort increased when provided with adaptive tools.

Adaptations reduce frustration and allow students to work at their zone of proximal development. Furthermore, it could be concluded that due to the reduced frustration that students experienced when given adapted assignments, they were able and willing to complete their assignments, and in some cases, reduced problem behavior. One student stated, that without adaptations, he tried "really hard, and then I get frustrated and I never finish it." He went on to say that as a result of his frustration, he really doesn't do work and walks around instead. However, he added that with the adaptive tools, he tries the hardest he can to finish it, his behavior improves, and he is able to focus more. Responses to the statement "This tool made

the assignment too easy" on post-assessment surveys coincided with student- and GE teacher-participant interviews. The average rating to the statement was 1.49, which was between "strongly disagree" and "somewhat disagree." It should be noted that the two responses in which the students replied with "somewhat agree" were by the two of "higher functioning" students which I was unsure of whether they needed that particular adaptation or not. This opens up the discussion of how to determine whether a student needs an adaptation based on previous performance and the teacher's prediction of their comprehension of the topic being assessed, which will be discussed in the limitations and recommendations section below. Overall, students seemed to be working at a comfortable level, as no frustration was expressed during the assignment or on post-assessment surveys or during interviews. Additionally, the GE teacher felt the adaptations were appropriate. Mrs. Smith said,

> They still do have questions because they still need to be able to understand the whole concept to work with the tool. But they can at least self-start, instead of just sitting down and staring, they are able to know, 'Okay, this looks familiar. I have the examples here. I have the hint here.'

I also made the following not in my reflective journal, "I am so impressed with how well the essays are coming along and how independently everyone is working. . . I think [Student X] and [Student Y] are still a little confused about how everything is supposed to fit together. . ." Mrs. Smith's comment and this reflection could illustrate that although students are working independently, they also need the assistance from the teacher, in order to move on to the next level. Wood, Bruner, and Ross's (1976) idea of scaffolding theorized that this reaction is appropriate when students are provided scaffolding, emphasizing the importance of the teacher

assisting in the process of learning beyond their independent level. Likewise, it could accentuate Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which stresses that a student will learn at a level which fosters independence, but still needs an expert to assist in further learning.

Adaptations provide a fair avenue to foster learning. Students overwhelmingly responded positively to the post-assessment survey statements: "I learned more using this adaptation," "this helped me understand the assignment better," and "this adaptation was helpful," with averages of 4.59, 4.49, and 4.59, respectively. With this in mind, the students did not find that the adaptations were too difficult. On post-assessment surveys, students response to, "the adaptation made the assignment more difficult to understand" yielded an average response of 1.24, lying between "strongly disagree" and "somewhat disagree;" conceding that the adaptations were not confusing to the students. Although ease of assignments was greatly improved with the adaptive tools, it was apparent that these averages all fell between the "somewhat agree" and "agree" ratings. Further, student responses indicated that the adaptations concurred with survey responses. Many students expressed that the tools assisted in recall, structure, or organization; similar to having a teacher or IA provide them with an example to get started.

A significant portion of the students also conveyed that unadapted assignments are too difficult or complicated, laying ground for struggle and all too often, failure. For example, many students expressed that when an assignment is too difficult, they simply don't turn it in—or even try—because it's beyond their frustrational level. One student said that when she's given an assignment that is too difficult, "I usually don't turn it in or don't get-- cause it's too hard so I just

forget about it." It was obvious throughout the research and through collection of data and observations that these tools were of great benefit to the students. In fact, Mrs. Smith implemented many of the adaptations as tools for the entire class, regardless of whether or not the students had IEPs. This would reinforce the notion of perceived acceptability by Polloway et al. (1996), in which the teacher found the adaptations helpful and accurately measured student performance, which affected the extent to which they were utilized; in this case, utilized for her entire class. Conversely, as I noted in my journal, she did comment at one point that they were a lot of work, but didn't make any comment that it was too much for her. However, it reminded me that sometimes, teachers don't have the time or energy to create adaptive tools like this. Some authors (Bradley & Calvin, 1998; Schumm & Vaughn, 1991, as cited in Mastergeorge & Martínez, 2010; Ysseldyke et al., 1990) suggest that teachers are inclined to see the most necessary adaptations as the least realistic, thus resulting in a slim chance of being employed (Bursuck, et al., 1996).

Throughout the research, I was faced with a complex situation where I worked closely with a GE teacher that didn't perceive accommodations as being fair. I noted in my journal, that this GE teacher would repeatedly make comments such as, "I just don't think it's fair that SPED students can get all these accommodations and still get the same grade as students without them." Often this would come up when I questioned a student grade, because I felt that students earned better than the score they received, and oftentimes, students would come to me and mention that they got marked down for not turning in something on time, regardless of their IEP accommodation of having extra time and my communication with her, at any given point, that the student needed it. As this was an isolated situation, it still bothered me every time I thought

about it, and lingered even when I would go to bed at night. As I continued with my research, I only wished that she saw what I saw. Even before the research began, I would see their frustration with the presentation of the curriculum in their eyes. I saw many of the students as conquered by a curriculum that was beyond their comprehension, on the verge of having a total lack of confidence in the subject, which was evident in their inability to complete any of the tasks presented to them in that subject. On the upside, it made me more passionate about my research and furthered my desire to seek more answers for these students. Mrs. Smith, on the other hand, was very forthright when she told me that she didn't know what some of the students receiving SPED services needed, but being a participant in the study provided more clarity as to what they need. She said,

> . . . for me, it helps me know where they actually are lacking—then I can say, 'Oh, this is what he thinks of this. Now let's redirect.' So it does provide them success— and myself as well. It helps me realize now, instead of saying, 'I don't know anything [in regard to what they need],' I [now] know where they need the support."

She was gracious, thankful, and I was very fortunate to work with someone with such an open mind and a passion for differentiated instruction. She agreed that the adaptations were fair, useful, and universally helpful. Similarly, other teachers utilized some of the tools for their entire classes after I shared them. However, the teacher that I had difficulty getting through to, saw it as giving the students an unfair advantage over their GE peers, despite the fact that most of the time, the original tasks were far too complicated for many of the students with SPED services to be able to access. Frankly, many students with SPED services are, in fact, very different from their GE peers, despite our efforts to view them as the same. Their needs are very different, thus

calling for us, as educators, to meet their learning needs through whatever avenue is appropriate; one that will often be different than their GE peers. One student shared that adaptations were fair, "because Special Educational students need more help than a regular student . . ." Likewise, another student commented, "we also have to understand that that's the reason we have this class [service]. . .You know? It's going to help us. Cause we're not, like, the same as the others . . ." The students were much more insightful about their disabilities than I had previously thought; before the data collection began. Some stated that they were visual learners, while others expressed that importance of material being broken down in order for them to comprehend it.

Although there are dramatic differences between students with and without SPED services, I often hear from other special educators and administration, and even say myself, that it is important that we refer to the students as "our" students, not "my" students or "your" students. This implies that they are part of the GE population, but we, as SPED teachers, are providing them a service, hence my reference to these students throughout this thesis as "students receiving SPED services" and not "SPED students." I believe this is an extremely important concept for all educators to realize. We all need to take equal responsibility for their learning. However, I would often encounter thought-provoking situations in which I felt a sense of ownership over them with the GE teacher that I had difficulty with. I felt an urge to protect them from becoming discouraged by the far too complex tasks which they were presented with, and the inflexibility which the teacher mentioned above exuded, especially when I was not present. Most of the students voiced during the interviews that they would usually ask for their IEP accommodation of extra time if they needed it, but most also voluntarily expressed that this particular teacher usually told them they couldn't have extra time even when they asked for it.

When I would have consult with her regarding a given student at any point in time, I would find myself in more of a debate, trying to defend their necessity for adapted material. If and when she agreed, it would be begrudgingly; in effect further distancing and negatively compounding our professional relationship. Also, many also expressed that they were not afraid to ask their other teachers, but were afraid to ask her, which leads to the topics of confidence and self-advocacy.

Adaptations improve confidence and build self-efficacy. Most students said in one way or another that their confidence greatly improved with the adaptations. This was perhaps, the most important finding in my research, as it could be argued that confidence is one of the most essential building blocks to success, and is a significant underlying factor to increased effort, achievement, and in turn, success. Results on the post-assessment surveys indicated that without the adapted assessment and/or instructional tools, students' confidence levels were low. The average rating on the statement "My confidence level without using the adaptation" was 1.65, falling between "poor and fair." However, responses on the statement, "My confidence level, after using the adaptation" averaged out at 4.02, indicating that their confidence was between "very good" and "excellent." Mrs. Smith acknowledged that the adaptations gave students,

> . . . the confidence . . . to help them realize, 'I know what this is.' . . . [And] provides them with success in the fact that they're now able to start on their own. They're now able to push themselves. They're now able to feel like, 'Okay, I can do this. I'll start somewhere.' It may not always be the right answer, but at least they're heading somewhere and that helps. . .

Further, as detailed previously, many students expressed that they wouldn't even attempt many of the unadapted assignments, but the adaptations provided an avenue for them in which they had the confidence to believe that they could at least attempt to accomplish the task at hand. One of the higher-achieving students stated that without the adaptation, her confidence level was, "probably like a 2 or a 1," whereas she rated her confidence level with the adaptation as "a 9."

Due to the increased confidence that the adaptations provided the students, their sense of self-efficacy also increased as a direct result. These adaptations enabled the students to now believe that they had the necessary means to execute the appropriate courses of action essential to complete their assessments. With this in mind, if consistently provided with adaptations, a greater sense of self-efficacy could be established in students, creating stronger confidence and commitment to their academic endeavors. Ideally, these adaptations would be faded at an appropriate point, but realistically and unfortunately, some students will need these tools throughout their educational careers in order to sustain success throughout their inclusion in GE CP classrooms. In my role as advocate for the students, it is my duty to identify their needs and convey that information to the GE teacher through consultative and collaborative measures. As it is clear that these adaptations are appropriate and do work, they also agreed that they learned more using the adaptations, they suited their needs, and that they would prefer to use them on other assignments. In post-assessment surveys, responses to the items, "I would like to use adapted tools such as this on other assignments," and "overall, I feel this tool fit my needs" yielded responses ranging between "somewhat agree," and "agree," both with average ratings of 4.71. Student narrative during interviews corresponded with these findings. All students in the research implied at one point or another that the adaptations worked and provided an avenue to

learning that was not previously set. In identifying tools to aptly meet the needs of students, it is my hope that the students now know what they need to learn and can further advocate for themselves. As that is the long-term goal, it is my duty in the meantime to deliver this information to their GE teachers and continue to serve as their advocate.

Hopefully, students will have more teachers like Mrs. Smith in the future, who genuinely want students to learn and will provide for their unique needs in whatever way is deemed appropriate. Nevertheless, students and SPED teachers alike should be able to exist in an environment where they can meet the same learning outcomes as their GE peers, and not be afraid to ask teachers for accommodating their needs. As SPED teachers, we strive to teach our students how to be their own advocates, but when they have teachers that are consistently negative to their requests, it can become discouraging for them to the degree that they may give up.

Overall. By and large, students responded very positively to adapted assessment and instructional tools. Students, the GE teacher-participant, and I all concurred that the adaptations were appropriately scaffolded to their needs and provided a level playing field to access the curriculum and allow learning to take place. In turn, the confidence of students was boosted, and they put forth the effort required to complete their assessments, which is often not the case when presented with unadapted material.

Action Plan & Recommendations

In determining what the topic of my thesis would be, I tried to figure out what aspect of my job I was most passionate about. The answer came with clarity, but I was a slightly intimidated by taking on such a huge undertaking. Originally, I was going to focus on different

methods of grading, but instead decided to shift the focus to improving success by implementing adapted assessment and instructional tools. My decision to transfer my focus onto adaptations was to put more emphasis on *learning*, rather than grading. A grade can be based on effort, but that doesn't necessarily mean that learning actually take place. Likewise, a grade can also be based on progress of an IEP goal, but that does not imply in any way, that the student is anywhere near meeting the numerous grade-level the standards expected of their GE peers. It could be based on a whole host of other factors, but it seemed that this was the best way to see an increase in student achievement. If the correct adaptations are put in place, the student grades should naturally reflect that and be improved as a result.

Because I very much enjoy creating adapted material, I will continue to do so and seek ways of improving my methods. Many teachers have some really great ideas and tools already, but it is a matter of organizing them, compiling them, and sharing them with other teachers. I enjoy sharing my tools with other teachers to help them meet the needs of their students, as I don't view "their" students as students that I don't want to help. It is my belief that bridging the gap between general and special education students provides opportunities for all students to succeed.

At a Professional Learning Community conference I attended, I kept having a vision of SPED and GE teachers alike leaning over one students' shoulder to provide the sharing of different methods of instruction that will be most beneficial for each students unique needs. I still think about that whenever I hear the word *collaboration.* I believe it would be extremely helpful if, during collaboration time, teachers created a compilation of adapted assessment and instructional tools to share with the entire staff, including IAs. This would allow for students

receiving SPED services to reap the same benefits as other students receiving SPED services with different teachers. I will certainly propose this to administration to encourage sharing resources and methods. As I have an abundance of adapted assessment and instructional tools, I will share them with any teacher that is willing to try them. I was pleased that during the GE teacher interview, Mrs. Smith said that she would do the same thing.

In an ideal world, teachers would provide these accommodations to the students consistently, but many teachers do not know how to make these adaptations (Munk & Bursuck, 2001). Many teachers view it as a daunting and time-consuming task, and others admit that they are not sure of what students need to be successful, sometimes because of a lack of familiarity with student IEPs. The literature points out that the most common accommodations that are provided to students include things such as reading test items aloud, providing extra time, and other accommodation, which don't necessarily promote student learning for a student that has a wide gap to fill. By the same token, many teachers see the most necessary adaptations as the least feasible. I believe that I have the expertise to make these adaptations, albeit not perfectly, but I believe that based on the results of the research, I am pretty well-versed in that area. I would be more than willing to teach any teacher that is willing to give me the time to do so.

In addition to creating toolkits of adapted assessment and instructional tools through collaboration, I also plan on setting forth on a professional journey to create toolkits of my own adaptations, and find a way to share it with as many teachers as I possibly can. Considering that I follow my caseload throughout all four years of high school, I am exposed to most of the curriculum in a high school. I already have quite a bit of adaptations that I've created over the years to get started on. As time goes by, I become savvier, both technologically and in

pinpointing ideas of what many disabled students need; therefore, there will always be room for improvement.

I will continue to collaborate and consult with the GE teachers of students on my caseload, and continue to advocate for their needs, while encouraging their GE teachers to provide adapted assessment and instructional tools as appropriate, as well as to consult with me to determine what *will* work if and when their initial attempt is does not prove successful. I would encourage them to use adapted tools as proactive learning measures, rather than reactive or as an intervention to avoid the possibility of consistent failure.

Finally, I would like to present my findings to the staff at my school through a professional development. I believe that the data speaks for itself and the findings would help more teachers realize what many students with SPED services really need.

Limitations

Though the data and findings were consistent throughout the study, the sample size of the participants was small, with only 18 M/M students receiving SPED services, one GE teacher-participant, and myself. Also, the research only lasted six weeks and overlapped with state testing. This is a limitation; however, I do believe that if I had the resources to facilitate a larger and longer-term study, I would have similar results.

For future implementation, it is vital that GE teachers "buy in" to the belief that students with disabilities can experience success, and they must be willing to be flexible. This "buy-in" would come as a result of training and professional development in the areas of co-teaching, consultation, and collaboration between SPED and GE teachers. My experience with one GE teacher illustrated that advocating for student needs can be a formidable task for both SPED

teachers and the students alike. A full-inclusion model school must have training, guidelines, policies, and procedures set forth regarding consultation and how adaptations such as these are implemented. Unfortunately, the school that I teach at does not these in place.

The only two subjects included in this research were Algebra and English. Thus, it cannot be assumed that the finding would be the same the other important core subject areas such as Science and Social Studies.

Further limiting future implications of this research is the complexity behind student IEPs and acknowledging that there is a lack of familiarity with IEPs amongst GE teachers, who are also unfamiliar with their capabilities. However, it is my hope that GE teachers trust the professional integrity of SPED teachers to help communicate their understanding of student capabilities based on the familiarity with the student either through IEP documentation or ongoing observation of the student. Sometimes it is even difficult for the SPED teacher to gauge where a student's learning needs are. This is where a teacher must use their own judgment or do a pre-assessment in order to determine whether a student can grasp a particular topic, or if they should provide an adaptation.

The adaptations in this research were not clearly defined as falling under *accommodations* or *modifications*, of which there is a significant difference to most teachers. Most participants in the study are eligible for modified curriculum; however, I try to facilitate accommodated curriculum as much as possible, and save modifications as a last resort. Many teachers are unsure of what the differentiation between the two is, and many teachers also have a "do whatever works" approach, for both the GE and SPED population alike. A GE teacher has the discretion to do whatever they like with their grade book, so some may not care if formative

assessment is modified, as it is supposed to be used as a tool for learning. However, many GE teachers are concerned with summative assessment, in which a student must demonstrate what he/she learned as a result of instruction and formative assessment. Many GE and even SPED teachers are unsure of the delineation between modifications and accommodations. In my understanding of the distinction between the two, most of the adaptations in this research were accommodations. If students do need modifications, however, they should have access to them in order to be able to access the curriculum and practice their right to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) under IDEA laws.

Conclusion

According to FAPE, schools must provide a student with an education with access to the general education curriculum that results in educational benefit to the child, in accordance with IEPs designed to fit each students' unique learning needs. Thus, all educators must put personal philosophies regarding the fairness of adaptations aside and comply with federal law. Most importantly, educators must realize that they have a moral obligation to reach and teach all students. As educators, we must ask ourselves the fundamental question of what the potential consequences could be for not providing adaptations to students that are truly in need. Fair is not always equal, and the learning needs of each SPED student are unique. As SPED teachers, we are trained to identify needs and provide adaptations to address those needs. As the learning curve for these students is often steep, a teacher's learning to identify and address those needs also takes time and experience.

As grades are often the main indicator of success in secondary education, poor outcomes are all too frequent for students with M/M disabilities in inclusive environments (Munk &

Bursuck, 2001), we must find a way to remedy this. Providing these students with adapted assessment and instructional tools is a good start to not only improving grades, but improving student expectations as well. As evident in the research, many of these students went from 0's to at least *something*, which emphasizes the importance of adaptations and "breaking it down" to suit individual learning needs. Expectantly, these students will experience success in the form of grades as a result.

As the movement toward full inclusion and heterogeneous groupings is on the rise and becoming an increasingly familiar reality for most primary and secondary educational institutions, we must do everything in our power to garner differentiated learning environments, and ensure that no child falls through the cracks. While many educators, such as Mrs. Smith are open to and seek progressive approaches to reach every student's needs, others seem hesitant to change their mindset and adapt their lessons to fit every student.

As educators, we are responsible for shaping the hearts and minds of *all* students who enter our classroom doors. It is important that we don't establish environments where these students feel inferior to their peers because they cannot learn in the same way, or even worse, incapable of learning because the material isn't adapted or presented in a fashion which suits their needs. Thus, perhaps the most significant message in this research is that all students have the right to learn, and if they are not learning, teachers need to reach out and find ways to facilitate this.

In my first years of teaching, I interviewed one of my mentors/colleagues. She made a comment that truly resonated with me and often still echoes in my thoughts. She said that oftentimes, students with disabilities have the mentality that "*the red pen will strike again*,"

indicating many are afraid to try tasks that they may fail on because they have become all too familiar with failure. I feel that it is my duty as an educator to put down this metaphorical red pen, and facilitate equal access to the curriculum, so they can experience the learning that is essential to be productive, successful members of *our* society.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Sample reference guide/list: *Factor List*

Factor List: 1-100

1	1
2	1,2
3	1,3
4	1,2,4
5	1,5
6	1,2,3,6
7	1,7
8	1,2,4,8
9	1,3,9
10	1,2,5,10
11	1,11
12	1,2,3,4,6,12
13	1,13
14	1,2,7,14
15	1,3,5,15
16	1,2,4,8,16
17	1,17
18	1,2,3,6,9,18
19	1,19
20	1,2,4,5,10,20
21	1,3,7,21
22	1,2,11,22
23	1,23
24	1,2,3,4,6,8,12,24
25	1,5,25
26	1,2,13,26
27	1,3,9,27
28	1,2,4,7,14,28
29	1,29
30	1,2,3,5,6,10,15,30
31	1,31
32	1,2,4,8,16,32
33	1,3,11,33,
34	1,2,17,34
35	1,5,7,35
36	1,2,3,4,6,9,12,18,36
37	1,37
38	1,2,19,38
39	1,3,13,39
40	1,2,4,5,8,10,20,40
41	1,41
42	1,2,3,6,7,14,21,42
43	1,43
44	1,2,4,11,22,44
45	1,3,5,9,15,45
46	1,2,23,46
47	1,47
48	1,2,3,4,6,8,12,16,24,48
49	1,7,49
50	1,2,5,10,25,50
51	1,3,17,51

Hollingsworth, 2013

52	1,2,4,13,26,52
53	1,53
54	1,2,3,18,27,54
55	1,5,11,55
56	1,2,4,7,14,28,56
57	1,3,19,57
58	1,2,29,58
59	1,59
60	1,2,3,4,5,6,10,12,20,30,60
61	1,61
62	1,2,31,62
63	1,3,7,9,21,63
64	1,2,4,8,16,32
65	1,5,13,65
66	1,2,3,6,11,22,33,66
67	1,67
68	1,2,4,17,34,68
69	1,3,23,69
70	1,2,5,7,35,70
71	1,71
72	1,2,3,4,6,8,9,12,18,24,36,72
73	1,73
74	1,2,37,74
75	1,3,5,15,25,75
76	1,2,4,19,38,76
77	1,7,11,77
78	1,2,3,6,13,26,39,78
79	1,79
80	1,2,4,5,8,10,20,40,80
81	1,3,9,27,81
82	1,2,41,82
83	1,83
84	1,2,3,4,6,7,12,14,21,28,42,84
85	1,5,17,85
86	1,2,43,86
87	1,3,29,87
88	1,2,4,11,22,44,88
89	1,89
90	1,2,3,5,6,9,15,18,30,45,90
91	1,91
92	1,2,41,92
93	1,3,31,93
94	1,2,47,94
95	1,5,19,95
96	1,2,3,4,6,8,12,16,24,32,48,96
97	1,97
98	1,2,7,14,49,98
99	1,3,9,11,33,99
100	1,2,4,5,10,20,25,50,100

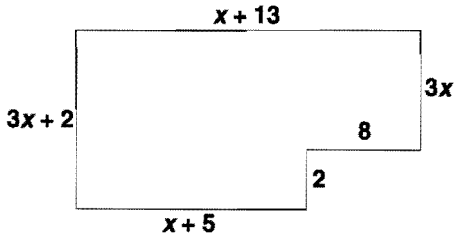
Hollingsworth, 2013

Appendix 2: Sample math assessment with "hint boxes" and "get started!" clues

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

CST PRACTICE

1 **What is the perimeter of the figure shown below, which is not drawn to scale?**



PERIMETER: The distance around the outside of an object

To find perimeter, ADD up all the sides

***Make sure to combine like terms**

A $5x+33$

B $5x^3+33$

C $8x+30$

D $8x^4+30$

2 $(4x^2-2x+8)-(x^2+3x-2)=$

A $3x^2+x+6$

B $3x^2+x+10$

C $3x^2-5x+6$

D $3x^2-5x+10$

HINT:

$4x^2 - 2x + 8$

$-(x^2 + 2x - 2)$

(distribute the negative)

$4x^2 - 2x + 8$

$-x^2 - 2x + 2$

$+10$

3 **A volleyball court is shaped like a rectangle. It has a width of x meters and a length of $2x$ meters. Which expression gives the area of the court in square meters?**

A $3x$

B $2x^2$

C $3x^2$

D $2x^3$

HINT:
Area = $l \cdot w$

4 **Which of the following expressions is equal to** $(x+2)+(x-2)(2x+1)$?

A $2x^2-2x$

B $2x^2-4x$

C $2x^2+x$

D $4x^2+2x$

HINT:
Order of Operations: **PEMDAS**

Get Started!
First, multiply: $(x-2)(2x+1)$ = _____
Then add it to:

_____ + x + 2

Hollingsworth 2013 (Adapted)

5 **What is the *y*-intercept of the graph of $4x + 2y = 12$?**

Get started!

4(0) + 2y = 12

A −4

B −2

C 6

D 12

HINT:
To find the *y*-intercept:
- First, make $x = 0$
- Find the value of y

6 **What is the *x*-intercept of the line defined by $-2x + 3y = 12$?**

A 6

B 4

C −4

D −6

HINT:
To find the *x*-intercept:
- Make $y = 0$
- Find the value of x.

7 **Which point lies on the line defined by $3x + 6y = 2$?**

A (0, 2)

B (0, 6)

C $\left(1, -\frac{1}{6}\right)$

D $\left(1, -\frac{1}{3}\right)$

HINT:
1) Make a table of values:

X	Y
0	
1	
2	

2) Plug the value of x into the equation to find the value of y.

8 **What is the equation of the line that has a slope of 4 and passes through the point $(3, -10)$?**

A $y = 4x - 22$

B $y = 4x + 22$

C $y = 4x - 43$

D $y = 4x + 43$

Get started!

y=mx+b

-10 = 4 ( ) + b

HINT:
SLOPE-INTERCEPT: $y = mx + b$ $(3, -10)$
m = slope x, y

- Plug the value of each variable into the formula to find the value of b.
- Write down the equation with the value

Hollingsworth 2013 (Adapted)

Appendix 3A: Sample graphic organizer, step-by step tool to solving problems. Unadapted vs. Adapted Math Assessments.

Unadapted version excerpt:

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____
Practice:

Factor each quadratic below, if possible. Use a Diamond Problem and generic rectangle for each one.

a. $x^2 + 6x + 9$ b. $2x^2 + 5x + 3$

c. $x^2 + 5x - 7$ d. $3m^2 + m - 14$

SPECIAL CASES

Most quadratics are written in the form $ax^2 + bx + c$. But what if a term is missing? Or what if the terms are in a different order? Consider these questions while you factor the expressions below.

a. $9x^2 - 4$ b. $12x^2 - 16x$

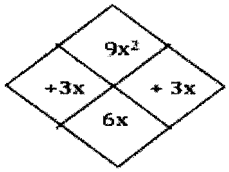
Adapted version excerpt:

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____
PRACTICE: FACTORING QUADRATICS

USE YOUR FACTOR LIST!

Factor each quadratic below, if possible. Use a Diamond Problem and generic rectangle for each one. ***Make sure you have the positive and negative signs right!***

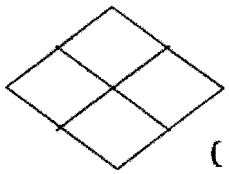
a. $x^2 + 6x + 9$



+3	3x	9
x	x²	3x
	x	+3

(x +)(+)

b. $x^2 - x - 20$

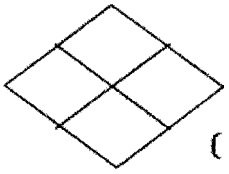


		-20
x		
	x	

( )( )

c. $x^2 + 5x - 7$

x		
	x	



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SPECIAL CASES:

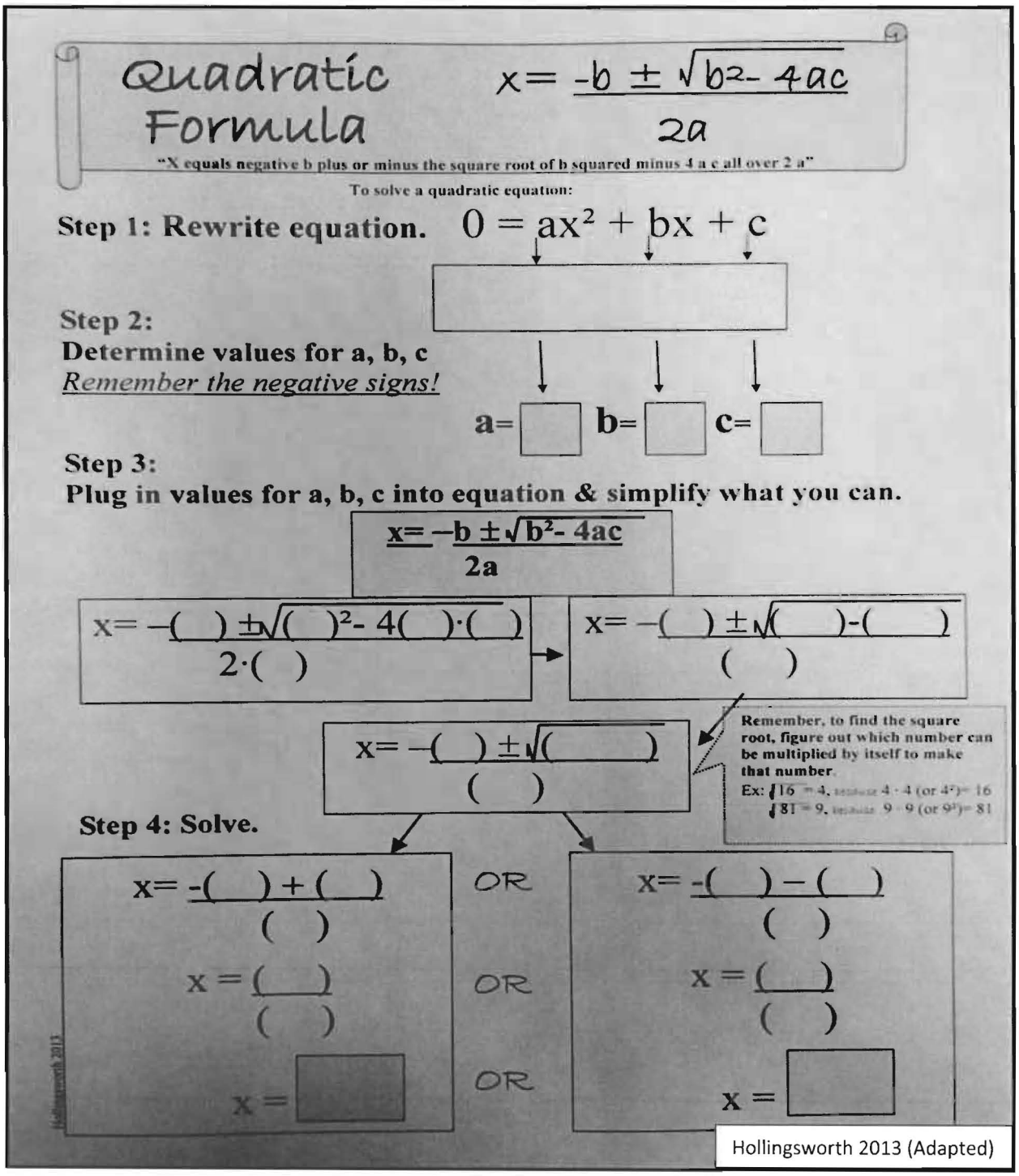
- Most quadratics are written in the form $ax^2 + bx + c$.
- If a term is missing, think of it as being "0."
- All algebraic terms should be in descending order, with the exponents in order from largest to smallest. EXAMPLE: $5x^4 + 3x^3 - 2x^2 + 7x - 4$

Think about these hints when factoring the expressions below:

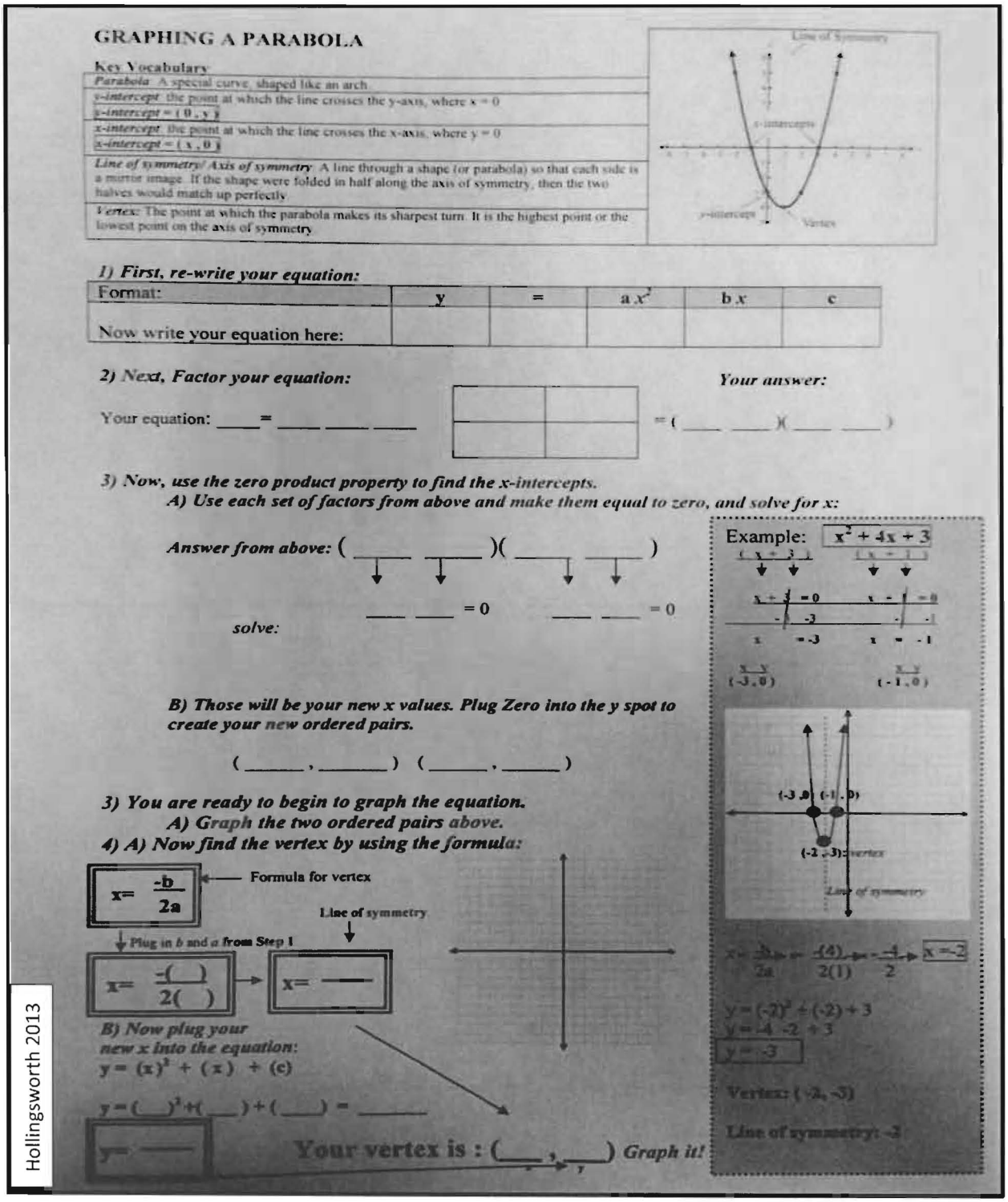
a. $9x^2 - 4$ b. $-100m + 40$

Hollingsworth 2013 (Adapted)

Appendix 3B: Sample handout with formulas, graphic organizers, step-by step tools to solving problems.



Appendix 3C: Sample handout with formulas, samples, graphic organizers, step-by step tools to solving problems.



Appendix 4: Writing frame sample: synthesis essay writing frame excerpt.

RESEARCH PAPER
TEMPLATE / WRITING FRAME

TOPIC/TITLE:_____

Paragraph #1—Introduction

Hook: Start with a startling fact, a quote, interesting fact, or some other "hook" of interesting information. (Pick your note card that is most interesting, and either put it in your own words or use the quote) _____

_____

_____

_____

Your thesis statement *(Make a strong claim and back it up with reasons)*. Use "Thesis Statement Help Worksheet" for extra help.

_____

_____

_____

Paragraph #2—Background Information on the topic

Define the topic and what it means. ***(Choose one bullet point)***

- *(Topic)*_____ can be defined as _____
  _____
  _____.

-OR-

- *(Topic)*_____ is _____
  _____
  _____

Provide a short history of the issue. (How has it changed over the years? Make sure this is in chronological order [in order of time])

- ***EXAMPLE—*** *(Topic)*_____ first gained attention in / began in *(year)*_____, when _____
  _____
  _____. In *(year)*_____, it became even more notable / newsworthy/important when _____
  _____
  _____
  _____. Since then, _____
  _____
  _____.

Discuss why it is important *(Choose one bullet point)*

- _____ is important because _____
_____.

-OR-

- Although _____ may seem of concern only to a small group of _____, it should in fact concern anyone who cares about _____.

Paragraph #3—Category 1: _____

Topic Sentence- <u>What will you argue/prove?</u> *(Choose one bullet point)*

- When it comes to the topic of _____, most of us know / don't know that _____
_____.

-OR-

- When it comes to the topic of _____,most of us will readily agree that _____. Where this argument usually ends, however, is the question of _____
_____.

Support (Choose one bullet point)

- According to *(author)* _____,"*(quote or paraphrase that has to do with the topic sentence above)* _____
_____
_____
_____."

-OR-

- _____ states _____
_____
_____.

Explanation – What does this quote really mean / say?

- _____
demonstrates / suggests /reminds us / emphasizes / acknowledges/ celebrates the fact / complains / agrees / insists / believes that _____
_____
_____.

Analysis – How does this evidence prove your thesis/ topic sentence?

- As a result of this, / Consequently, / For this reason, / Thus, / Therefore, / Nevertheless, / Despite (this), / Notwithstanding (this) / In spite of this, / Regardless (of this) / On the other hand, _____
_____
_____
_____.

Transition (This will connect the topic/category above to a similar category/topic)

- In addition to / Furthermore / Moreover / Besides / Equally important / Further / Likewise / Similarly / In fact / Consequently / In the same way / For instance / However / Thus / Therefore / Otherwise _____
  _____
  _____.

Support (Choose one bullet point)

- According to *(author)* _____ ,"*(quote or paraphrase that has to do with the topic sentence above)* _____
  _____
  _____
  _____."

-OR-

- _____ states _____
  _____
  _____.

Explanation (Choose one bullet point)

- _____
  demonstrates / suggests /reminds us / emphasizes / acknowledges/ celebrates the fact / complains / agrees / insists / believes that _____
  _____
  _____.

-OR-

- Basically, _____ is saying _____
  _____
  _____.

-OR-

- In other words, _____ believes that _____
  _____
  _____.

-OR-

- In making this comment, _____ argues/ further demonstrates that _____
  _____.

Analysis (This will analyze the quote/ paraphrase above)

- As a result of this, / Consequently, / For this reason, / Thus, / Therefore, / Nevertheless, / Despite (this), / Notwithstanding (this) / In spite of this, / Regardless (of this) / On the other hand / Although / However / In consequence / Even though / Nonetheless / Though / _____
  _____
  _____
  _____.

Concluding/ transition sentence *(Choose one bullet point)*- <u>How does this evidence prove your thesis/ topic sentence?</u>

- Consequently, / Hence, / For this reason, / Thus, / Because (of this), / Accordingly, / Therefore, / As a consequence, / In consequence, / So, _____ _____ _____.

-OR-

- Essentially, _____ _____ _____.

-OR-

- What _____ really means is _____ _____ _____.

-OR-

- In other words, _____ _____ _____.

-OR-

- To put it another way, _____ _____ _____.

<u>Paragraph #4—Category 2:</u> _____

Topic Sentence - <u>What will you argue/prove?</u> *(Choose one bullet point)*

- When it comes to the topic of _____, one issue many people are not aware of is _____ _____.

-OR-

- When it comes to the topic of _____, a great deal of attention has been placed on _____ _____ _____.

Support (Choose one bullet point)

- According to *<u>(author)</u>* _____,"*<u>(quote or paraphrase that has to do with the topic sentence above)</u>* _____ _____ _____ _____."

- _____ states _____ _____ _____.

Appendix 5A: High-achieving Student Sample Rough Draft Essay using Research Paper Template/Writing Frame

[redacted]1

[redacted]

English 7-8

25 April 2013

In the U.S there are 126,000 children who need to be adopted; however, there are 38 states that do not allow gay adoption. Consequently, many of these children will remain without families because most states do not allow gay adoption. Gay adoption will give orphaned or abandoned children a chance to live a happy life; therefore, the United States should pass a bill allowing it in all states.

Gay adoption can be defined as two parents of same sex trying to adopt a child. According to Lea leader of the Gay Straight Alliance at a public high school "gay couples are just the same as straight couples; there are advantages and disadvantages, but in the end the only difference is gender." As of 2013, gay adoption is allowed in 14 countries in the world and only 13 states in the US, including Washington DC and Guam (loveandpride com). Thus, it is a primary issue that is an active debate in the US. The number of gay adoptions has increased, however, there are still millions of children that need homes (Manford, 6), and the law has gotten in the way of letting perfectly capable parents adopt these family-less children. In Georgia, "there are twelve thousand children who are in the foster care system" (Manford 1).Due to this, most states that prohibited gay adoption like Florida began allowing gay adoption as of November 2008(Unknown www loveandpride.com). More states have began allowing gay adoption, and it has tripled in [the past] six years" (Unknown www.loveandpride.com). In fact today about "4

percent are living with gay parents" (Unknown www.loveandpride.com). This demonstrates that gay adoption is becoming more accepted and widespread through out the U.S, and there are to many children that need families to keep discriminating against these perfectly capable parents. This also suggests that while most states do allow gay adoption some still deny a child their chance to live a happy life with two parents. Lea leader of the G.S.A. argues same sex marriage should be legal and without taboo the reasons for many people being against gay marriage, which are mostly based on religion and stigmas, are invalid." Gay adoption will give children the opportunity to live a happy life with a family; thus, it is critical to stop setting boundaries in the child adoption process. Although some states are depriving children of their happiness some are giving and effort to let a child be adopted by gay parents; as a result, since two thousand nine the number of adoption has increased last year a record of 3,700 was celebrated. Since the number of adoption has increased at the moment there are about 14 countries that allow gay adoption. These include: Andorra, Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Netherlands, Norway, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Uruguay (Unknown Laws.com). Gay adoption is important because children require the chance to live with two loving parents.

When it comes to the topic of gay adoption most people know that it is not legal in most states; moreover, most people do not support gay adoption due to their religious beliefs, but what these people fail to acknowledge is that gay adoption is the door of happiness for many children. People should just let gay couples marry and adopt children. If the government continues to deprive children of their families with gay parents the number of gay couples wanting to adopt will continue to increase. According

Appendix 5B: Low-achieving Student Sample Rough Draft Essay using Research Paper Template/Writing Frame

[redacted] 1

[redacted]

English 7-8

[redacted]

26 April 2013

Big Box Stores

"Wal-Mart celebrated 50 years of helping people save money so they can live better"(51)."The company employs 2.2 million associates worldwide and serves 200 million customers each week at more than 10,000 stores in 27 countries" (52). Big box stores, such as Wal-Mart are taking over all over the retail industry because of their affordable prices, which for other makes it difficult to compete.

Wal-Mart was founded in 1962 by Sam Walton and is a store that provides everything from groceries to cosmetics to appliances to automotive repair and vision centers complete with optometrists. Wal-Mart is the leading "big box superstore." (also referred to as a "superstore" or megastore"), in the United States. Store such as Target and Costco follow their lead as superstores and trail behind their ranks as number one store. In 2005 it became even more notable when Wal-Mart took a leading role in disaster relief, contributing $18 million and 2,450 truck loads of supplies to victims of hurricanes Katrina and Rita (37). Wal-Mart is the largest seller of toys, furniture, jewelry, dog food, and scores of other consumer product (B9). Ninety percent of Americans live within fifteen miles of a Wal-Mart, so they are everywhere (E2). Wal-Mart is number one seller of guns in America, deodorant, DVD's, bicycles, and toys (E2).

When it comes to the topic of reasons to shop at big box stores, most of uses know that Wal-Mart has the lowest prices and has everything that you need in one stop. According to Daniel Stoffman, mega stores have the public washrooms near the entrance, while the washrooms at others are on where to be found. The washroom at the entrance speaks volumes about the respect and consideration it accords its customers (A3). This reminds us that when we go to other stores that are not big box stores that the bathrooms are nowhere to be found or they don't even have a public washroom in there store, so we either ask a employee if they have one or we go to another store that you are sure that there is a public washroom that you may use. Consequently, a customer might never go back to the store with no washroom available for their use. In addition to this design tactic, you can't beat the prices at big box stores. When a "family's credit card debt topped $ 10,000, Wal-Mart's deals suddenly looked irresistible," said a father of four (B12). This demonstrates that big box stores help every day people that have problems with money and can get what they need at a very low price and can still have money left over for what they may need it the future. "If you have lower real prices, you're saving money," said Arthur Laffer, a key advisor to President Reagan who is now an economic consultation San Diego (B15). Nevertheless people still enjoy saving money for other thing they may need when its need and if you do that the people will keep going to the same store where they noticed that they where saving a lot of money.

When it comes to the topic of Working for big box stores, one issue many people are not aware of is that the employees at big box stores are not getting paid very well for the things that they do for the company they work at. According to an employee whose former job no longer existed since Wal-Mart drove the small business out," he earned

Appendix 6: Sample confidence and attitude rating post-assessment survey.

Survey on Adapted Measurement Tools
Adapted tool: _____
Please rate each of the areas below to evaluate the adaptation that you used.

	1	2	3	4	5
My confidence level WITHOUT using the adaptation	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent
My confidence level, after using the adaptation	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent
My effort level WITHOUT the adaptation	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent
My effort level WITH the adaptation	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent
The adaptation made the assignment more difficult to understand.	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor diasgree	Somewhat agree	Agree
This tool made the assignment too easy.	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor diasgree	Somewhat agree	Agree
This adaptation was helpful	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor diasgree	Somewhat agree	Agree
This helped me understand the assignment better	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor diasgree	Somewhat agree	Agree
This tool makes me feel that I can do better in school	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor diasgree	Somewhat agree	Agree
I feel this can make me a more successful student	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor diasgree	Somewhat agree	Agree
I learned more using this adaptation	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor diasgree	Somewhat agree	Agree
I would like to use adapted tools such as this on other assignments	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor diasgree	Somewhat agree	Agree
Overall, I feel this tool fit my needs	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor diasgree	Somewhat agree	Agree

Additional Comments

_____

_____

_____

Appendix 7A: Sample individual interview transcript

The following is a transcript from an audio-recorded interview with one student.
T: Teacher
S: Student

T: Okay. Ready?
S: Yes.
T: Okay. So. Speak clearly please. Okay?
S: All right.
T: Okay. So what is it like to be a Special Education student in a General Education class?
S: It's embarrassing for me cause I can't really read.
T: So you can't really read, but do you think other kids know that you can't read?
S: No.
T: No? Okay. So why are you embarrassed?
S: Cause I can't read hard words, letters.
T: Okay. So now we'll talk about adapted assignments. So you know, like modifications and stuff. So think about the outline that I gave you for your essay that you just did. How did that help you or not help you?
S: It just makes it—breaks it up to two pieces and makes it easier for me to work.
T: Okay. So without it, how do you think how good you would feel? How good would you feel without it?
S: I wouldn't be able to get nowhere.
T: So how would you feel if you didn't have modified assignments?
S: It would have been harder. More harder for me to focus in school.
T: Okay. Why?
S: Cause I get frustrated.
T: You get frustrated? And how do modified assignments help you?
S: Cause they're more easier for me to look at.
T: Okay. What would it be like if you didn't get adapted assignments?
S: I don't know. I wouldn't have been able to keep up in class.
T: Do you feel as if that—do you feel as if you're able to keep up with other students when you have adapted assignments?
S: Yeah.
T: Okay. How have adapted assignments helped you with your grades?
S: Cause it makes me do my work instead of having a lot of thinking.
T: So you don't have to think as much?
S: Uh huh.
T: You mean like they're not—
S: They're not as—
T: Frustrating?
S: Yeah.
T: Okay. So if you didn't have adapted assignments, do you think that you would pass your classes?
S: No. Cause it would have been hard for me.
T: Okay. So if you had a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being the most confident, you feel the best about yourself, and 1 being the least confident, so not feeling good about yourself, how good do you feel about yourself when you don't have an adapted assignment?

S: Like a 2.
T: A 2? Okay. And how good do you feel about yourself when you have an adapted assignment?
S: It just makes me think that I have more focus on it.
T: Okay. So on a scale of 1 to 10, how good do you feel about turning a piece of paper in when it's adapted?
S: A 6.
T: A 6? Out of 10?
S: Yeah.
T: Okay. Do you feel like you learn more with adapted assignments?
S: Yeah, cause it's easier, like I can focus more on it. Cause it's basic.
T: So do you, when assignments aren't adapted, do you feel as if you learn?
S: No, because they're complicated for me.
T: Too complicated for you?
S: Mmm mmm. Yeah.
T: Okay. How hard do you try when you have work that isn't adapted?
S: Really hard, and then I get frustrated and I never finish it.
T: How does that affect your behavior in the classroom?
S: I don't really do work in class.
T: You don't do work? Is there anything else that you do when you can't do work?
S: Uhhh. Yeah, walk around in class. Get frustrated.
T: And how hard do you try when you do have an adapted assignment?
S: The hardest I can to finish it.
T: Okay. And what is your behavior like when you do have an adapted assignment in the classroom?
S: I focus more.
T: Do you feel like your behavior is better?
S: Yeah.
T: Okay. Do you feel like you could get through high school without adapted assignments?
S: No, cause it would have been hard for me to have SPED classes.
T: Do you feel like they've helped you get through high school?
S: Yeah.

(end)

Appendix 7B: Sample Group Interview Transcript

The following is a transcript from an audio-recorded interview with four students.

T: Teacher
S: Student

T: Okay. So the first question is without a tool like this to write your essay, how confident do you feel about writing?
S: Not confident at all.
S: It would be pretty hard.
S: Except I wouldn't even do it even if I wanted —
T: You probably wouldn't have done it?
S: No.
T: Your whole essay?
S: Yeah.
T: So you would have done your—oh, and another thing that I gave you guys was the outline tool.
S: Oh yeah.
T: So think about that too. So you probably wouldn't have done it?
S: No.
T: Okay. Jaime?
S: It'd be pretty hard.
T: It would have been hard?
S: Yeah. . .
T: Okay. Would you have tried?
S: Yeah, probably try.
S: I would ask the teacher to explain it more.
T: Okay.
S: I would probably get stuck and feel like, "Okay, I may have a question but, like, do not understand it."
T: Okay. So what is your confidence level like with a tool like this?
S: It actually goes up because I would actually try and it would be a lot easier to write down the, get the information down and easier to make the paragraph, like finish the essay.
S: It would be easier for me to do it.
S: A simple understanding paper.
T: Would you understand it otherwise?
S: Yeah.
T: You would understand it if you didn't have this?
S: No.
T: No, you wouldn't? Okay. Does this help you understand it?
S: Kind of.
S: It gives me like a better understanding of what I have to do and I'll put more effort in trying.
T: Okay. Which leads me to the next question. Would you try harder with something like this?
S: Yes, I would.
S: Yeah.
S: Yeah.
S: Yes.
T: Can you explain?

S: Explain why I would try harder?
T: Yes.
S: Because pretty much all that information is already written down and all you have to do is fill in the blanks with the information you found.
S: It looks simple. It's not that hard.
S: Easier to understand and write.
S: It is easier for understanding and you can figure out how to do the writing better, then you can prove what you need to a lot better.
T: Okay. So is it too easy? Does it make it too easy?
S: It doesn't make it like—it doesn't make it too easy but it's like just right for you to understand it and know what to do than not having it at all, as in like, you don't know what you're supposed to write about.
S: Not really.
T: It's not too easy?
S: No.
T: Juan? Do you think it's too easy?
S: Um —
T: So just the right amount of challenge or?
S: Just the right amount, yeah.
S: Mmm mmm. There's not too much or too little challenging.
T: Jaime? Just the right amount or not enough?
S: Yeah, I think the right amount.
T: Okay. Juan?
S: Same thing.
T: Okay. Do you feel that this helps you learn about the writing process?
S: Yeah.
T: Or what do you feel this helps you learn, if anything?
S: It helps you get started pretty quick.
S: It like helps you understand what's supposedly in the paragraph. How to start it off, how to end it and everything.
S: It helps you fill in like important stuff. Like helps you like see like what's important and what's not.
T: So what this is, is it's—it gives you the structure of what the paragraph should look like. And also helps you with sentence structure. So it has the stuff that we call it the, well, it just has the stuff, your stuff that you're researching on. That's the important stuff. But this helps you form sentences right. Like how confident do you feel in forming sentences? Or paragraphs? Do you feel that you can write a well-written paragraph or sentence on your own?
S: Like I can, but it won't— it won't look as good as when you write it down. Then it makes a lot more sense than if it would try to write it.
T: Juan?
S: It would seem, it would seem like more sense to us, but if a teacher reads it, it might not be as understanding as she—are understood.
T: So if your teacher gives you some hand-outs, and it says this is what's supposed to be in your essay, and then explains it to you, how does that help you?
S: Not at all, cause all she's doing is giving me a piece of paper and pretty much, I have to read it, and she's just telling me like what she wants on it. She's not explaining like—she's not explaining the detail like what she really wants on it, how she wants it done, and that can —
T: So you need more models?
S: Yeah.

S: Yeah. But then I'm a visual learner.
S: Yes. I'm a visual.
T: But for you?
S: Yeah.
T: If you had something like this or, you know, like multiple choice tests or worksheets that you were given and with hints, would you feel like you would be able to succeed more as a student?
S: Yes, cause if it gave me just like little hints, I probably could catch on the hint and be able to refresh my memory, or something.
T: Is it because you—that's another thing. So do you forget a lot of things and then you just need something to remind you?
S: Yeah.
S: Sometimes.
S: Yeah. Like I say if we did something last week and she wants to see what I remember, like, if I don't see it in front of me, or like a hint or something, or I won't say anything. But like if I got a hint it'll come back in.
T: Okay.
S: Sometimes you probably forget why.
S: Yeah, sometimes.
T: Okay. So here's another question. What is it like being a Special Education student in a General Education class such as Government, Econ or Math or English or Science?
S: It's kind of hard because like everyone stares at me when I walk out and it's like just cause I'm going away or something doesn't mean I'm any different with you guys. Kind of like, it's kind of hard to come in here sometimes because I don't like it when people stare at me. It just gets me mad cause — just cause I have a disability doesn't mean I'm any different. I don't learn— just cause I don't learn the same as you doesn't mean I'm different. And that's pretty much it.
T: Jaime? What is it like to be a Special Education student in a General Education class?
S: It's kind of hard, yeah. It's not easy cause like he said, when you walk out, everyone's just looking at you.
S: Yeah. Depending on the subject. It depends what kind of subject you like and they look at you different if you work harder than some other classes.
S: Sometimes it feels harder on me because I forget her name, but it's like they stare and it's like very uncomfortable.
S: Like from 1 to 10 or?
T: No, I mean like if you're a student in class and you're a Special Ed student, and the rest of the students are General Ed students, and your teacher gives you an assignment. And there's no changes to it. It's the same document as everyone else. What is that like?
S: It's hard because —
S: It's like reading—
S: Yeah, it's like easy. Like they'll get right into it. They already know what to do and everything. But when it comes to me, I'll just stand there and look at the page cause I wouldn't know what to do cause I don't understand.
T: Jaime?
S: Well, I get it but it takes me longer to finish it. Like longer than them. They finish right away.
S: Yeah. It takes me a little bit longer just to finish the assignment.
S: It takes me longer and also if I have to read a question, and I don't understand it, I go almost brain dead cause I get frustrated and—
T: Do you guys ask for help?
S: Yeah.
S: Once in a while.

S: Yeah, once in a while like—I don't really like asking for help because I never really did. I was never—yeah, my teachers were always telling me that I should but I never—
T: You should.
S: I don't like, I don't like it, I don't know why.
T: Yeah.
S: I don't know I just don't, it's not that I don't trust my teachers, it doesn't help me either so I never really liked it.
T: Juan? Do you ask for help when you need it?
S: Yeah, sometimes I ask the teacher or my partners. Because sometimes the teacher repeats the same thing. Then I got to— I'll probably ask my friends to – and they'll probably sound out or understand the same, more understandable for your partners tell you. You know how teens talk and they make it like easier to understand. Yeah.
T: Okay. What do you think would help you do better in your classes?
S: They should— yeah, give me more time on assignments. Like for English—modify some of the—modify the quizzes and tests cause sometimes I don't even know what I'm doing on it. And every other class I'm fine. Except English, I have trouble.
S: Yeah, probably just give you more time cause I'm trying to keep up with Econ and English and it's pretty hard cause it's a lot of work.
T: But you feel like you could get a good grade as long as you get your extra time
S: Yeah.
T: And you know that you do have extra time on your IEP, right?
S: Mmm mmm, yeah.
T: So any time you need it, you guys, you have that on your IEP. So if you're doing something during class and your teacher says, "This has to be done by the end of class," or "This has to be done in ten minutes," you can always go up to your teacher, and quietly say, "I need more time on this."
S: Okay.
T: I—it's an IEP accommodation. It's something that you guys are all legally entitled to. Okay? It's in your IEP. That's a legal document. So if your teacher says no, then that's when you, you know, come to me and talk to me about it. Then I can go over your IEP with them if need be.
S: For some reason my teachers aren't like that. Ms. –
T: Okay. So, what was that?
S: Like usually my teachers – I ask him. And [Teacher X], if I ask him if I can have more time he'll say, "it's fine; just turn it in when you can." But [Teacher Y], occasionally she'll let me do it but not very often. It's not like every time I need more time on an assignment. Like some assignments I can actually do in class. Just like on the essay right now is when I need more time cause I don't understand.
T: Well, you guys all get that[as an accommodation].
S: Yeah.
T: So don't be afraid to ask.
S: Okay.
T: And then if the answer is no, then don't be afraid to come to me.
S: All right.

(End)

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